A Spiritual Vision in John Updike's Early Fiction

B. D. Sharma

In the book *A Spiritual Vision in John Updike's Early Fiction*, Professor B.D. Sharma has traced the spiritual vision lying embodied in John Updike's novels *The Poorhouse Fair*, *Rabbit, Run*, *The Centaur*, *Of the Farm*, *Couples*, *Rabbit Redux*, and *Bech: A Book*. Professor Sharma asserts here that John Updike is in close sympathy with the spiritual views of the theologian Karl Barth even if he cannot be described as a Barthian. Dr. Sharma discusses how there is a recoil from materialism in *The Poorhouse Fair*, how existentialism finds projection in *Rabbit, Run*, how the value of self-sacrifice finds embodiment in *The Centaur*, how the non-Christian approaches to social problems have been rejected in *Of the Farm* and *Couples* and how the values of the pristine of Christianity have been upheld in, by and large, all the novels of John Updike, including *Rabbit Redux* and *Bech: A Book*. The book has been designed so as to be found useful by both critics and teachers. It also contains much that students too will find of use. Professor Sharma has also made an attempt here to see whether John Updike can be placed in any of the currents in the contemporary American fiction.

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A SPIRITUAL VISION IN JOHN UPDIKE'S EARLY FICTION

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Preface

Man is a thinking animal and he likes not only to do but also to think about who he is, what he does, and what his actions are resulting in. His efforts have enabled him to have science and technology at his command and they have reduced his inconveniences a great deal. But the over-all impact of science on man has not been one hundred per cent pleasing, not to speak of being laudable. Consequently there are people who are not happy with science. They hold man superior to lower animals for his moral sense and, so, they are disturbed to find that science, far from elevating man ethically, lowers him down, or, at least, makes him apathetic towards ethics. And so they feel the need of reviving religion.

It is not enough to admit that man needs religion too: man needs the essence of true religion and the essence of religion, as Yudhishthir points out in *Mahabharata,* lies hidden inside something like a cave and cannot be traced out easily. Man expects religion to answer countless questions the chief of which is as to what is desirable for man to do do. Those in the religious field claim that answers are revealed to man: they are not to be arrived at through experiments, reasoning, intuitions, and speculations. The implication of the term 'reveal' is that it is not for man to decide as to what he wants to know about and how much, but it is for the revealer to decide as to how much He wants man to know about what. This applies not only to

the metaphysical questions but also to the ethical ones. The situation, however, is not free from confusion: various persons claim to have been used by the Supreme Being as His flutes and contradictions exist between the 'truths' claimed to have been revealed. A variety of attempts have been made to remove the contradictions. But the task is not easy for a person with the capacities of man. The more interpretations they give the nore contradictions become perceptible.

John Updike, one of the leading novelists of the United States of America, does some thinking on some such issues of life in his early novels, namely *The Poorhouse Fair, Rabbit, Run, The Centaur, Of the Farm, Couples, Bech: A Book,* and *Rabbit Redux.* He takes up for treatment various aspects of the philosophies upholding the cause of science and materialistic progress and artistically expresses his views about them in these novels of his. He seems to be trying to express his views on the role of the Church in the life of the modern man, on the ethical systems which are replacing the Christian ethics in the West, on the issue whether one can remain ethically virtuous even if one adheres to the dictates of one's own conscience and depends on no external authority.

An attempt is being made in this book to decode those views of Updike. I have tried to decode Updike's views on four major issues, namely the impact of the welfare measures of the governments, people's flouting the norms of the institution of marriage, the role that the Church is playing in restoring ethics, and the validity of the 'natural theology', a theology that permits one to follow the dictates of one's own conscience. Moreover, I have moved on from Updike's views on these issues to the study of his diction, symbols, images and descriptions. I believe the book will help readers understand John Updike better, suggestions for improvement are welcome.

BRAHMA DUTTA SHARMA

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1

John Updike and the Contemporary American Novel

Most of the contemporary[1] American novelists are concerned primarily with the question 'what is man?' —a question that assumes different shapes in different contexts. In the context of man's relation to his environments, it changes itself into 'How is man related to the society in which he lives?' while on the wider plane of the ultimate questions of human existence it shapes itself into 'What is human consciousness and how is man related to his Creator, if any?' These forms of this question are responsible for different approaches to the problems and mysteries of life. The first form gives rise to the awareness of the social conditions which one may praise or disparage, and the second one to the metaphysical outlook which may take one to accept the established doctrines or to make a quest for some new ones. One may also pay attention to both these aspects simultaneously and discuss both social and metaphysical questions side by side. On this basis the trends that can be identified in the contemporary American novel are five in number: the social-critical, the accommodationist, the Beat-absurd-black humorist, the quest, and the neo-social critical.[2] Of these the social critics and the accommodationists are preoccupied with the social conditions around them while the

Beats and the quest-novelists with the metaphysical questions as well.

SOCIAL CRITICISM

The novels in which the contemporary society is criticized from the leftist point of view[3] and its ills are attributed to the capitalistic system of society constitute the first category. The social evils and inequities attacked in these novels are presented as the manifestations of the varying degrees of the rightist ideology and the reforms they propose reflect their equally varying degrees of the leftist thought. In the novels of this kind the writers are occupied either with the evils like poverty, injustice, bossism, and profit-motive of the factory and orchard owners or with the unmasking of Nazi-fascism and revealing that it is the source of world wars. As in the anti-capitalist novels capitalism is depicted as the main enemy of the people, in the anti-fascist novels fascism is presented as a universal evil which is merely epitomized in the fascist countries. In these novels fascists are portrayed as the enemies of mankind driving the world to annihilation and misery, and all the efforts to restrain fascism, including a world war, are justified.

In the anti-capitalist novels the factory and orchard owners are portrayed as the exploiters of the workers and as the persons who are interested in nothing else but their profits. They are pictured as shrewd people fully equipped with the knowledge "when to stalk the tempting quary of Opportunity, how to seize her by the proverbial forelock, and, perhaps most valuable of all, when to let her go."[4] They are shown doing "their pioneering behind desks, in whispered conferences, or in the weltering hysteria of Stock Exchange; inculcated with the traditional American spirit of individualism....transmut[ing] this spirit with crude alchemy, through a philosophy of opportunism, into a residuum of ill-gotten gold."[5] The sympathies of these novelists are always with the working class. They give voice to the miseries of the workers and portray them as the victims of the economic injustice of capitalism. They also picture the stiffling influence of poverty and miserable living conditions on the individual and illustrate how poverty drives even well-intentioned and talented workers to degeneration and leads

them to succumb to corruption. Class-struggle, in the form of strikes, is their favourite theme. They admire all those who have not attained material success: the have-nots, the misfits, the simple, the poor and the oppressed, and condemn all those who have: the haves, the owners and the administrators. In short, these novels are attacks on big business, monopoly and a general disregard for the common citizen in the struggle to corner the wealth and resources of the world.

Such social criticism finds manifestation in the novels like Irwin Shaw's *The Troubled Air* (1951) and Stefan Heym's *Goldsborough* (1954). Irwin Shaw's novel projects a witch hunt haunting the entertainment industry and exposes the profiteering motives of the owners while Stefan Heym's novel is woven round the problem of the coal-mine strikes.

The anti-fascist social critical posture is consistently maintained by the ex-war novelists like Anton Myrer, Irwin Shaw and John O. Killens. They condemn various aspects of Nazi-fascism, present it as an immediate and overpowering evil, and suggest that the war against it, though it might have been vicious and barbaric, is necessary, if not good. Anton Myrer vehemently attacks the amoral materialism of the Americans and their institutions in his novel *The Big War* (1958). He suggests that there is an equation between fascism on one hand and whatever is insidious in the American society on the other. John O.Killens' *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (1960) exposes the anti-racism of the white troops in the same tone.

ACCOMMODATION

The novels in which the smiling aspects of life, rather than the gloomy ones, find projection form the second category. These novels are free from social criticism. They are marked by a mood of relaxation, faith in society and its institutions, and a desire to accommodate oneself to the conditions as they exist at the moment. The writers of these novels turn to the bright aspects of life, and picture the strengths of social institutions, rather than their weaknesses. They assume a conservative attitude towards their nation, government, and social customs. This attitude indicates a change in the outlook of the Americans as "after fifteen years of high-powered ideological idealism,

especially of the conscience-pricking sort, most Americans wanted to relax, to enjoy life, and to Think Positive."[6] It is the outcome of the loss of faith in the efficacy of social criticism which leads a novelist to a disaffiliation with his environment and makes him an alien in his society.

The accommodationist trend finds expression in the novels like Dos Passos' *Mid-Century* (1961) and Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* (1951). In *Mid-Century* "the kind of large-scale, highly organized panoramic novel which [Dos Passos] had invented in U.S.A."[7] the author, while depicting the contemporary America, shows how the combined efforts of the people can improve the condition of the individual and remove his miseries. Herman Wouk expresses the following attitude towards war in *The Caine Mutiny:* "....it is a soldier's duty to accommodate himself to ironies, to relinquish his conscience to men and institutions which, bad as they might be, operate expediently for the greatest good of the greatest number. Damn individual rights and dignities; full speed ahead. Queeg may be an ignorant, unstable officer with Fascist tendencies, anti-Negroism may be a deplorable tendency of many Americans, but the correction of these conditions must be postponed until after the war."[8] Wouk, in spite of supporting the anti-fascist war like the novelists of the first category, opposes the criticism of his nation and its institutions.

The other novels which manifest this trend weli, though they do not possess much literary merit, are Herman Wouk's *Marjorie Morning Star* (1955), Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955), Alen Drury's *Advise and Consent* (1959) and *Capable of Honor* (1966), and Fletcher Knebel's *Seven Days in May* (1962) and *Night of Camp David* (1965).

However, both these trends are slowly dying chiefly because "the writer has ceased to believe that the social world can reveal the direction of man's soul...[and] is turning increasingly to the inmost self, examining it both in relation to the higher levels of being which it controls and the outside world by which it is set in motion."[9] This is evidenced by the novels included in the succeeding three categories.[10]

BEAT AND ABSURD—BLACK HUMOUR

The works of the Beat novelists and the absurd-black humorists form the third category. The Beat movement,[11] which rejects theChristian theology as well as morality, and denounces the established society and the accepted values, projects itself in the American novel through the works of Jack Kerouac, "the prolific Grand Llama of the Beat Movement,"[12] J. Clellon Holmes, and William Burroughs. This approach is again a manifestation of the loss of faith in the efficacy of social criticism. The Beats depict social criticism to be something worn out, out-dated and incapable of making any change in the existing conditions. Their reaction is positive only in a negative way because they affirm everything that the middle class opposes. For example, they stand by the taking of intoxicating drugs and the experiencing of totally uninhibited sex but reject politics and all the institutions from the Church to the academy.[13]

The views these novelists affirm are anti-social and marked by petulance. Their violent inclinations are a negation of the condition necessary for a well-ordered society. For them the present generation is a beaten one and in their novels they represent a "keen sense of a past lost and a present squandered."[14] They expose the follies of the traditions and arouse the reader's withering scorn for them. Man, as shown in these novels, is "threatened by a chaotic universe in which he is a stranger, by his cancerous social values and institutions, by his new technology and even by psychopathic forces deep within himself."[15]

The absurd-black humorists too perceive all value and order in the modern world to be up for grabs. Like the Beats, who are their forbearers in rejecting the established social values, these humorists reject social criticism as something totally incapable to cope with the anxieties involved in trying to stay alive, not to talk of remaining sane in this world. Their themes are, likewise, the inescapable anguish, loneliness, and self-consciousness. However, they are far more sophisticated in their attitude towards the anxieties of death than the Beats and, at the same time, not so violently anti-social. They employ humour on a large scale with a view to making their message easily digestible to the readers. "Their view of life is audaciously 'black'—subversive, enraged, even apocalyptic. The stage groans

with the wreckage of bewildered innocents and sinister megalomaniacs, cannibals, and intellectual rapists. But the Black Humour [sic] manner short-circuits any strong response to this. The novels stay coolly 'humorous', murderously farcical, coldly zany, cosmically slapsticky. Black humour likes nutty plots, mischievous messages, and an acrobatic style."[16]

The writers who can be included in the list of the absurd-black humorists are Friedman, Thomas Pynchon, Joseph Heller, Edward Albee, John Barth, Terry Southern and James Purdy. Their work runs from the far-out crazy attacks of *Catch—22* (1961) to the bitter satire of *Giles Goat-Boy* (1966). In all their novels the absurdity of the contemporary American life is ridiculed in a biting tone. But downright pessimism is quite rare in them. Whether one reads Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1960), or Paul Bowles' *Let It Come Down* (1952), or Edward Loomis' *The Charcoal Horse* (1959), one never finds the ray of optimism missing. It is on this ground that their view is found different from the existential absurdity delineated by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus* where there is no ray of hope for the future.

Since, in their eyes, "there is an erosion, if not an entire sweeping away of assumptions [the Americans] once thought secure"[17] in the contemporary American society these novelists treat the self as their supreme referent. They show that the society has no texture or business worth bothering about and exists only because it hangs upon the individual and conditions him. Thus this literature is primarily the study of self and its main concerns are the private and instructive imperatives of the individual. The protagonists of these novels find themselves in a void which is created by the absence of any established value. They are led to a personality which is existential and evasive. All of them champion the cause of rebellion, nihilism, and frenzied self-affirmation. This is so with the hipsters of Kerouac, the addicts of Burroughs, the orgy masters and pimps of Brossard, and the perverts and homicides of Vidal.[18]

QUEST

The quest novelists also reject the Christian theology and morality. But they are not satisfied with mere rejection and go

to seek new values which may fill the vacuum created by the loss of Christianity. Their works are marked by a consistently high calibre of production and literary merit. The most prominent of them are Saul Bellow, Paul Bowles, Norman Mailer, Flannery O'Connor, J.D. Salinger, Carson Mc Cullers, and William Styron.[19] The protagonists of all these novelists are cut off and disaffiliated from their society. For example, Peter Leverett in Styron's *Set This House on Fire* (1959), while listening wistfully to his father's reminiscences of the New Deal years, sadly realizes that they represent a commitment he cannot make; Henderson in Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) is angered by everybody who happens to encounter him whether it is his wife, or child, or mistress, or servant, or any stranger; Moses Herzog in Bellow's *Herzog* writes letters denouncing the established values and is given to mouthing social-critical platitudes in a vacuum; Mikey Lovett, in Mailer's *Barbary Shore* (1951), is a returned war veteran without a memory, surrounded by a corrupt Mc Carthyite, an ex-Stalinist, and an ex-war Trotskyist, seeking in the ruins of the past for the certainty of a hopelessly lost conviction; and Holden Caulfied in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), is sickened by the behaviour of his fellow beings, finds that his situation is understood neither by his parents nor by his teachers, and feels that all others are, both mentally and spiritually, in a world quite different from his own.[20]

The questions their protagonists face are, as Diana Trilling puts them: "Where do we, where shall we, where can we derive our moral sanctions: from a failing tradition or from the wild, free impulses of our racial infancy, from the ego or the id?"[21] They are placed in inescapable and terribly frightening situations and then examine and delineate individual responsibility. The universe, as seen by them, is a vast incomprehensible flux and man an alien. Man's longing for order and justice is frustrated by his constant encounter with chaos and meaninglessness, and his finitude is lost in infinite complexity. It is in the state of a universal chaos that the protagonist attempts to seek some spiritual order. Sometimes he accepts the reality of the spiritual dimension of human life and sometimes asks if this dimension should take precedence over man's responsibilities to his fellows and neighbours. Since he has no faith in the Christian doctrine

or any other accepted theology, he has to look within himself for answers to the questions pertaining to spiritualism.

The response of these novelists to the loss of faith in society and social criticism is different from those of the accommodationists, and the Beats and black humorists. It is different from the response of the accommodationists in the sense that the quest novelists find themselves incapable of simple conformity which the accommodationists propound. It is again different from the absurdity of the Beat or the black humour variety because the quest novelists not only indict what is established but also seek new bases of order, and also suggest cures for the malady.

Inspite of the fact that man, society, and universe, as depicted by these novelists, have no fixed nature, and are shown in terms of possibilities which shift constantly as individual makes his choices, this trend in the contemporary novel is not socially irresponsible. "It insists instead on a more valid relationship of man with society—based on the free assumption of social responsibilities by the self. Because it keeps the real alternatives open, this relationship allows for the expansion of human possibilities and for a more meaningful, positive commitment to humanity."[22] This is evident from the fact that the protagonists of the novelists share a belief in man's ability to establish a new secular humanism in place of the traditional values which they find obsolete.

The quester as presented in these novels, is a non-conformist who refuses to accept any ready-made definition of good and evil, calls all in doubt and is left in a state in which he has nothing but his self to guide him. He is absolutely valueless or, as Ihab Hassan puts it, "innocent'.[23] When this innocent quester attempts to create new values for himself, he is, because the society refuses to admit that its values are dead, immediately termed a racial. The society does not wish to allow this quester to stick to his individualism and expects him to relinquish it before adjusting himself to his environments.

This quester, whether it is Henderson in Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Raih King*, or Frank alpine in Malamud's *The Assistant*, or Serquis O'Shaugnessey in Miler's *The Deer Park*, or Holden Caulfield in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, is a sad but roguish figure. While seeking his way in the wilderness he

succumbs to the temptations of flesh and leads a sinful life. He also finds himself guilt-ridden and strives mightily for expiation. Since he has no fixed system to guide him and depends on his own self and his own ability to live, he behaves in an ironic and eternally quixotic way. For instance, Salinger's Caulfied wishes to erase all obscenities of the world, leads an unhappy and melancholy life and gives himself to sexual looseness.

The quest of this protagonist is motivated by the assumption that there is something to find—inspite of the fact that his immediate reaction to the ways and ethics of the society in which he lives is total rejection—and that something is of an essential, even ultimate value. And the value at which this quester arrives is love and, its commitment, responsibility—love of man and responsibility to the self. Love is his only response to chaos. For example, it is love which forces Holden Caulfied to distinguish between reality and unreality, which makes Frank Alpine his lover's father and places him helplessly behind the grocery counter, which causes Randle Patrick Mc Murphy to expose his vitals to the shears of the Big Nurse, which sets Cass Kinsolving's house on fire and restores his sanity and manhood to him, which rescues Moses Herzog from the spiralling depths of depression, which gives Stephen Rojack the right and courage to face his nemesis, which sits upon Bromden's shoulders as he forces the pillow down on Mc Murphy's face, and which sends Henderson running round and round the airplane in the arctic cold clutching the little child in his arms.

Sex figures prominently, and in a surprisingly similar fashion in each quester's conception of love. As a consequence, there is a great deal of sex in these novels. It is introduced in several varieties: heterosexual, homo-sexual and orgiastic. But it is not sex for sex's sake. Pure experimental sex is conceived to be a dead end and a circular detour along the way to self-fulfilment. Sex without love is treated as a sin which invites punishment. If the quester fails to live so strongly as to accept responsibility he commits sin, and gets punishment for it; and the punishment is the loss of the way and ensnarement. For example, the homosexual hero in John Rechy's *City of Night* (1963) fails in his quest because the sex in which he indulges is lacking in love.

NEO-SOCIAL CRITICISM

The contemporary American fiction is also rich in respect of

the novels in which the contemporary social conditions are criticized from a non-Marxist point of view and the problems taken up for discussion are concerned more with humanitarianism than with the politico-economic system of society. In these novels the treatment of the issues is always conditioned by the attitudes and natures of the men and institutions that create them. These novels form the fifth category. The social criticism given in these novels is different from that of the first category. The novelists included in the first category are concerned with the criticism of big industry, big farming, ways of the administrators and policemen, and fascist militarism. But the novelists of the fifth category take up the issues like the Vietnam war and the denial of the civil rights to the American Negro and this social criticism is basically unpolitical and supra-political. The enemy identified by the novelists of the first category is a capitalistic political system, a political party, or a fascist dictator, but it is not so with these novels. They are unable to identify any system or party to be the root cause of the social evil. Joseph J. Waldmeir, while summing up their approach, observes : "They are inclined to identify anti-Negroism as conservative, but they do not, therefore, project a blanket condemnation of conservation in liberal terms. Indeed, they are as unremitting in their attacks on misguided or sentimentalized liberalism as in avowed racist conservatism."[24]

The problems before the social critics included in the first category were simpler, though more numerous than those faced by these critics. They were political and economic in close combination. There also emerged, for those critics, an identifiable enemy who performed dastardly deeds in the name of a politico-economic system. But the new critics find fault with the attitude of the people. To solve the problem, they suggest, one must change the attitude of the people and the conditions that are responsible for it. It entails the reducing of the society to the individual—its smallest unit. That is why these novelists affirm the dignity, worth and rights of the individual.

The reflection of this attitude runs the gamut through the novels like Richard Wright's *The Outsider* (1953), *The Long Dream* (1958), and *Lewd Today* (1963), James Baldwin's *Go Tell It On the Mountain* (1953) and *Giovanni's Room* (1956), and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952).

All these novelists depict in their novels that the racial prejudices are rampant in the American society and the Negro has to suffer humiliation and injustice in all walks of life only because of his black complexion. Richard Wright, whose attitude is described as "consistently deterministic"[25] is found "giving voice to such outrage and perplexity as the American Negro inherits, [and] giving to anger the complex dignity of art."[26] He shows how the Negroes are crushed chiefly because of their social environments, elements of heredity and the misdirected attempts of the whites to break down the colour bar. His Negroes sometimes, as in *The Outsider,* get fatally involved in the political parties, and sometimes, as in *The Long Dream,* are driven to corrupt business dealings with both the Negroes and the whites.

The view that the Negroes are subjected to oppression at the hands of the whites finds explicit projection in James Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain.* In this novel Baldwin delineates how in America the Negroes are looked down upon, insulted, beaten and mutilated. This novel can be taken as a representative treatment of the Negro life by the novelists of this group. Baldwin presents in his novels a society in which injustice is widespread and Negroes are its victims. It is a society in which inter-racial tensions "crackle in the air everyone breathes, trickle unnoticed in the water they drink, [and] are part of the gritty bread they eat."[27] The view Baldwin embodies in his novels finds expression in the following passage:

> It began to seem that one would have to hold in the mind for ever two ideas which seemed to be in opposition. The first idea was acceptance, the acceptance, totally without rancor, of life as it is, and men as they are: in the light of this idea, it goes without saying that injustice is commonplace. But this did not mean that one could be complacent, for the second idea was of equal power: that one must never, in one's own life, accept these injustices as commonplace and must fight them with all one's strength. This fight begins, however, in the heart and it now had been laid to my charge to keep my own heart free of hatred and despair.[28]

Baldwin's depiction of the American Negro has attracted the attention of the readers throughout the world.[29] "He is the only writer who has dealt with these painful things of Negro and white love and hate. He is the only writer who sees these questions whole and steadfastly and in all their inter-lockings and ramifications, and dialectics and permutations."[30] He portrays how the whites and the blacks work together, yet remain alienated; they love each other and yet refuse to discard racial hostilities out of their hearts. Baldwin's blacks are second class citizens. They are deprived of economic opportunities and barred from the places where the whites freely consort. Baldwin is an exemplary novelist depicting the Negro "bombarded by [the American] whirlwinds, by the immanent collapse of society, by the complication of being an American, of being Negro, of being an intrinsic part of the culture of apartheid, of being black yet not being African, of being a stranger, an interloper, an exile, heritageless together with his people, yet not being even a part of them."[31] So he can be called a great champion of the cause of the American Negro.

If the Negro as an individual oppressed in an unjust society is the fort of James Baldwin, the sub-surface aspect of the social machinery, which is responsible for his problems and which remains hidden behind the apparently smooth working order, grips the attention of Ralph Ellison who exposes it in his novel *Invisible Man* through a Negro who literally lives in an underground basement. Ellison is not driven to the subjectivity of the observer as to the working of the social machinery and the social aspects ranging from the relations between blacks and whites to the relations between blacks and blacks, and whites and whites.

The life of a Negro in these novels is marked by an unending struggle with his blackness. The essence of his life is rejection and its most destructive consequences is shame. This is shown, for example, in *Go Tell It On the Mountain* in which John is driven to deep despair and hears "a sound of rage and weeping....of boundless melancholy, of the bitterest patience,...the strongest chains, the most cruel lash; of humility most wretched, the dungeon most absolute, of love's bed defiled, and birth dishonored, and most bloody, unspeakable sudden death."[32] A Negro is shown encountering various forms of

cruelty for no fault of his own. The message of these novelists is that the Negro problem cannot be solved until the Negro is looked upon as a man first and a Negro afterwards or, still better, until he is looked upon only as a man and not as a Negro. It is in order to establish this second part of the attitude that these novelists reveal their impatience with white liberalism.

Moreover, these novelists focus their attention on the interaction between society and individual. They describe how individual's destiny is shaped by the social conditions; how the individual struggling against the social environment finds it too strong for him to change; and how the social surroundings often drive him to despair or suicide. They select for depiction those features of life which appear disconcerting and project the individual's helplessness in face of cruel social realities, and project that a human being is at the mercy of the blind forces of nature, heredity and social conventions—the factors that lie beyond the individual will and choice and do not operate at the behest of any divine being. The aim of these critics too is the affirmation of the individual.

Love is depicted in these novels as the true means of changing the attitude which has caused the problem of colour bar. It is shown that love can transcend all sorts of differences—whether ideological, racial or economic. In this respect these novelists have a resemblance with the quest-novelists. However, there is a vast difference between the two treatments. In the novels of the questers the questing protagonist comes to love at the end of the novel while the protagonists in the novels of the neo-social critics go on seeking it even at the end of the novel. For instance, Baldwin's Ida Scott, haunted by the death of Rufus, is trying desperately even at the end of *Another Country* to accept and return the love that is offered to her. Likewise, Ellison's nameless hero in *Invisible Man* ends as invisibly as he began. Moreover, these novelists present a dilemma that exists at the root of the race problem as it is shown in their novels: the attitude of the people of the rival forces cannot change without love and there is no possibility of love unless it changes.

Now arises the question whether John Updike can be placed in any of these five categories or not. Most of the critics have tagged him to the novelists who are included in the 'Quest' category. For example, Joseph J. Waldmeir, in his essay "Only An Occasional Rutabaga: American Fiction Since 1945"[32] includes

his name in the list of the 'quest' novelists on the ground that his protagonists are dissatisfied with the contemporary social conditions and go to seek new bases of value and order.[34] Heinrich Straumann employs the term 'psycho-symbolic-realism' to discuss these novelists and states that all these novelists are preoccupied with the study of the hero's mental reactions to the prevailing conditions in society and do it in symbolic terms.[35] David D. Galloway, on the other hand, connects Updike with the 'absurd' novelists arguing that the existential[35] absurdity of the sort delineated by Camus in *the Myth of Sisyphus* is evidently identifiable in Updike's works.[37] Likewise, Howard M. Harper brackets him with Saul Bellow, Salinger, Miler, and Baldwin on the ground that like them he is preoccupied with the intrinsic problem of human existence.[38] Granville Hicks finds him akin to Bernard Malamud and Herbert Gold on the ground that they belong to the generation of the 'fifties and are occupied with the theme of redemption.[39]

However, John Updike's approach to life and the questions of human existence is different from that of any other contemporary American novelist. In all his novels published so far, namely *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959), *Rabbit, Run* (1960), *The Centaur* (1963), *Of the Farm* (1965), *Couples* (1968), and *Rabbit Redux* (1971), he reveals his primary concern with the questions of theology and ethics, presents characters who express views about atheism, deism, natural theology, the Church and salvation, and affirms his faith in the revival of Christianity[40] as not other contemporary novelist included in the above mentioned five categories does.

The *The Poorhouse Fair* Updike presents a conflict between the secular and the religious outlooks of life through the debate between Conner, the administrator of the poorhouse, and Hook, the retired school teacher who is now an inmate of this house. The cause of atheism is championed by the administrator and that of spiritualism by Hook.[41] This debate is the central point of the novel and the action of the novel revolves round it. All the preceding incidents lead to it and all the succeeding incidents originate from it.

In *Rabbit, Run* he depicts a quester who rejects the theology and ethics of Christianity and wishes to seek new values including those of sex and natural theology. This quester, who has been a basket-ball star in his school days, puts forward

his own conception of God but finds his God failing him at every crucial point of his life.[42] The novel leads the reader to think over the problem whether a quest for new theological values is preferable to the acceptance of Christianity.

In *The Centaur* which is his best novel he takes up the question of salvation and illustrates by portraying a Christlike character how one can attain it.[43] It is here that Updike indicates his faith in Christianity, its theological view, and its moral values by employing the techniques of mythological parallelism.[44]

In *Of the Farm* he projects his primary concern with the question of woman's place in God's plan of the universe and shows how she is both superior and inferior to man and how she is synonymous with life itself. The sermon of the Lutheran pastor is the most significant part of the novel as it is through this that the novelist communicates his message.[45]

The theory of salvation-through-sex is dealt with chiefly in *Couples*.[46] The novelist derides this philosophy by identifying sexuality with sin inviting God's wrath. In *Rabbit Redux* he indicts the oriental theologies of Zen-Buddhism and Yoga.[47]

In his short stories and poems too he reiterates these themes and displays his intense concern with the religious view of life.

Unlike the novelists of the first category Updike does not criticize any social system on political and economic grounds. Nor does he depict the evils of fascism. Though a few champions of communism are introduced in *Rabbit Redux* and *Bech : A Book* yet the novelist does not disparage them from political or economic point of view. Updike differs from the 'accommodationists' on the ground that he does not glorify any American institutions and his characters do not readily accept the values prevailing in the contemporary American society.[48] Likewise, he cannot be aligned with the Beats or the absurd-black humorists because he decries these philosophies on theological grounds and introduces a champion of the Beat philosophy as a sinner.[49] The fourth category is too small to include him in itself because the novelists constituting it seek new spiritual and moral values after rejecting Christianity while Updike condemns the very idea of the rejection of Christianity.[50] Since the novelists of the fifth category are preoccupied with the problem of racial prejudices, emphasize the value of the individual in society, and have nothing to do with the

theological questions, Updike evades the grasp of this category too. On this ground Updike is to be judged as a class by himself rather than as a constituent of any family.

REFERENCES

1. The word 'contemporary' is used here to denote the period 'from 1945 to the present day' because John Updike began his career as a writer in the 'fifties and continues to write to the present day.
2. Joseph J. Waldmeir, "Only An Occasional Rutabaga : American Fiction Since 1945", *Modern Fiction Studies*, XV (Winter 1969-70), p. 469.
3. "According to [this] view, the State has always been the chief instrument of oppression of one class by another, and its laws and forms have been but the thinly disguised ways of controlling the wealth of society for the benefit of the few. Under capitalism, the modes of production would reach their highest state of development and would become concentrated among the fewest possible owners. Meanwhile, the workers, whose labour makes all this wealth possible, would become increasingly enslaved to the machines they operated, but also increasingly unified and disciplined as a revolutionary force. When the proletarian revolution takes place the exploiting capitalist class will disappear entirely, and the fully developed industrial apparatus will revert to its rightful owners, the workers of the world. Since there will be no need for anyone to expropriate the labour of another, the State as an instrument of oppression will 'wither away'. The new formula will be, 'From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs,' and all the complicated interactions of modern industrial technology will somehow automatically adjust themselves to the material needs of society" [Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* (New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 210].
4. Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* (New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 146.
5. Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* (New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 146.
6. Joseph J. Waldmeir, "Only An Occasional Rutabaga : American Fiction Since 1945", *Modern Fiction Studies*, XV (Winter 1969-70), p. 471.

7. Willard Thorp and Robert E. Spiller, "End of an Era", *Literary History of the United States* ed. Robert E. Spiller et al. (1963; rpt. New Delhi : Amerind Publishers, 1972), p. 1400.
8. Joseph J. Waldmeir, "Only An Occasional Rutabaga : American Fiction Since 1945", *Modern Fiction Studies*, XV (Winter 1969-1970), p. 472.
9. Nona Balakian, *The Creative Present : Notes on Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (Garden City, New York : Doubleday, 1963), p. xiv.
10. Explaining it Philip Rahv points out : "The younger writers are stirred by the ambition to create a new type of imaginative prose into which the recognizably real enters as one component rather than as the total substance. They want to break the novel of its objective habits; some want to introduce into it philosophical ideas; others are not so much drawn to expressing ideas as to expressing the motley strivings of the inner self-dreams, visions and fantasies. Manifestly the failure of the political movement of the past decade has resulted in a revival of religio-aesthetic attitudes. The young men of letters are once again watching their own image in the mirror and listening to inner promptings" ["Notes on the Decline of Naturalism", *The American Novel Since World War II* ed. Marcus Klein (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1969), p. 27].
11. Ihab Hassan considers it more of a religious aspiration than a social revolt : "Though it is often associated with San Francisco, the Beat Movement was essentially a natural, urban phenomenon, and perhaps the only form of overt, even flamboyant, rebellion in mid-century America. Its ultimate significance may reflect on the cultural rather than the literary life of the country. For the Beat Movement went farther in challenging the assumption of the American society than any one of the radical movements which preceded it in the thirties. Drawing on European existentialism as on oriental thought, and drawing, above all, on a native tradition of rhapsodic dissent which harks back to Emerson and Whitman, it spoke primarily for the beleagured Self, for the holiness and spontaneity of the natural man. This is why, despite its associations with adolescent violence, orgiastic anarchy, and the drug addiction, the Beat Movement was a form of religious aspiration even more than of social revolt. In literature, the sympathies of the Beat Movement ran toward freedom, oral improvisation, and even mindlessness; the movement defined itself in opposition to the formal, intellectual, and hieratic tradition of Eliot, Auden,

Wallace Stevens" ["Since 1945", *Literary History of the United States*, ed. Robert E. Spiller et al. (1963; rpt. New Delhi : Amerind, 1972), pp. 1413-14].

12. Ihab Hassan, "Since 1945", *Literary History of the United States* ed. Robert E. Spiller et al. (1963; rpt. New Delhi : Amerind, 1972), p. 1426.
13. The social scene which is responsible for the rise of this attitude is explained by William Barrett in the following way : "... Religion is no longer the uncontested center and ruler of man's life, and .. the Church is no longer the final and unquestioned home and asylum of his being... The waning of religion is a much more concrete and complex fact than a mere change in a conscious outlook; it penetrates the deepest strata of man's total psychic life.... The loss of the Church is the loss of a whole system of symbols, images, dogmas, and rites which had the psychological validity of immediate experience, and within which hitherto the whole psychic life of Western man had been safely contained.... Western man has spent more than five hundred years — half a millennium — in stripping nature of these projections and turning it into a realm of neutral objects which his science may control" [*The Irrational Man : A Study in Existential Philosophy* (New York : Doubleday, 1962), pp. 24-25].
14. Bruce Cook, *The Beat Generation* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 21.
15. Howard M. Harper, Jr., *Desperate Faith : A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike* (Chapel Hill : North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 197.
16. Burton Feldman, "Anatomy of Black Humour", *The American Novel Since World War II*, ed. Marcus Klein (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1969), p. 224.
17. Diana Trilling, "The Radical Moralism in Norman Mailer", *The Creative Present*, ed. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (New York : Doubleday, 1963), p. 164.
18. Ihab Hassan, "since 1945", *Literary History of the United States*, ed. Robert E. Spiller *et al.* (1963; rpt. New Delhi : Amerind Publishers, 1972), p. 1421.
19. "Although" as John Aldridge points out, "they have arrived at the end of the tradition of loss, negation and revolt, and have known none of its benefits, they have inherited the conditions out of which that tradition emerged. They are finding that modern life is still basically purposeless... But because they have never known life otherwise and were not exposed as their predecessors were, to the process by which it became

as it now is, they can write of it from neither the perspective protest nor that of disillusionment and loss" [The Search for Values", *The American Novel Since World War II*, ed. Marcus Klein (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1969), p. 43].

20. See Chapter II.
21. "The Radical Moralism of Norman Mailer", *The Creative Present: Notes on Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (New York : Doubleday, 1963), p. 164.
22. Howard M. Harper, *Desperate Faith* (Chapel Hill : The University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 197.
23. Ihab Hasan, *Radical Innocence : Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 40.
24. "Only An Occasional Rutabaga : American Fiction Since 1945", *Modern Fiction Studies*, XV (Winter 1969-1970), p. 480.
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27. Ihab Hassan, *Radical Innocence : Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 81.
28. James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 13-14.
29. Harvey Breit, "James Baldwin and Two Footnotes", *The Creative Present : Notes on Contemporary American Fiction*, ed. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (New York : Doubleday, 1963), p. 1.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
32. James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (New York : Knopf, 1963), p. 228.
33. *Modern Fiction Studies XV* (Winter 1969-1970), pp. 467-81.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 475.
35. Heinrich Straumann, *American Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York and Evanston : Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 127-28.
36. "[The existentialists believe that] each *individual* man is what he makes of himself by a succession of actions under-taken in complete freedom of choice in a situation which constitutes his particular physical and historical context... There is no transcendent Absolute or First Cause encompassing man's existence to which he can appeal to give his life form and

meaning; thus he makes his own 'essence' by the totality of his actions taken in perfect freedom of choice" [Rod W. horton and Herbert W. Edwards, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* (New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), pp. 457-58].

37. "The Absurd Man as Saint", *Absurd Hero in American Fiction* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1966), pp. 21-50.
38. Howard M. Harper, Jr., *Desperate Faith : A Study of Bellow, Salinger, Mailer, Baldwin and Updike* (Chapel Hill : University of Carolina Press, 1967), pp. 162-190.
39. "Generations of the Fifties : Malamud, Gold and Updike", *The Creative Present : Notes on Contemporary American Fiction* ed. Nona Balakian and Charles Simmons (New York : Doubleday, 1963), pp. 219-24.
40. See Chpater VII.
41. See Chapter III.
42. See Chapters IV and VI.
43. See Chapter VII.
44. See Chapter VIII.
45. See Chapter V.
46. See Chapter IV.
47. See Chapter VI.
48. See Chapter III.
49. See Chapter IV.
50. See Chapter VI and VII.

2

Evolution of His Spiritual Vision

John Updike's literary career does not fall into phases and cannot be broken into ideological and stylistic halves. However, there are evident marks of development, unsteady though it is in both his thought and style. Updike's earlier works do not reveal the philosophical depth which is perceivable in his later ones. For example, *The Centaur,* is philosophically far deeper than *The Poorhouse Fair,* and *Rabbit Redux* exhibits, better than *Rabbit, Run,* that Updike makes a successful use of symbolism.[1] In fact, his fiction moves from a facile social criticism to an increasing concern with the spiritual problems and to the use of symbolism on a larger scale.

Updike's attention has been drawn to the questions of spiritualism primarily by the conditions prevailing in the contemporary America. He belongs to the country which has achieved considerable prosperity and scientific advancement but where progress has not been able to satisfy man's spiritual needs. "There is," as Bernard James points out, "a sense of desperation in the air, a sense that change is sweeping everything before it, a sense that man has been pitchforked by science and technology into a new and precarious age, that the human race itself has lost its direction. Under the merciless glare of

empiricism, the venerable religious values have decomposed before our eyes."[2] The Christian moral values have crumbled and have been replaced by perversities and moral degeneration. "Urban violence swells, pointless perversities invade the arts [and] the young are caught up in a new romanticism of the most viscid kind."[3] People feel that they have been led to dismay by science and 'progress' philosophy. "[They] feel a sense of betrayal too, for this is not what [they] had expected when science and technology promised to build a shining new world for [them]."[4]

Such a state of affairs prepares an atmosphere that can lead the meditative minds to the alternatives of science. Many of the disillusioned Americans are, therefore, moving away from science and going to seek its substitutes. This is evident again from what Bernard James points out: "...the troubles of the world are driving us toward the surrender of many preconceptions with which our belief in the inevitability of progress once sustained us."[5] One of the alternatives to science is the revival of Christianity or a quest for some other religion which may satisfy the needs of the modern man. That is why a recoil from materialism in favour of religion is perceivable in the contemporary America. It has been acknowledged by Rod W. Horton and Herbert W.Edwards:

> Currently a swing of the pendulum back toward idealism would seem to be indicated by the steady rise in Church membership in the United States since the thirties and in the recent proliferation of largely fundamentalist religious splinter groups. Further apparent evidence of such a trend is the rise, under the leadership of Reinhold Niebuhr, of Neo-Protestantism, with its renewed emphasis on the sense of sin and the need for a profound commitment of the self to God and in the remarkable preaching ministry of the evangelist Billy Graham, whose old-fashioned version of the gospel message differs little from what our grandfathers heard in the mid-nineteenth century.[6]

Likewise, the oriental religions are gaining popularity in America and are attracting not only common men but also

scholars. It has been accepted by Winston L. King who remarks:

> .....now, of course, there is a growing number of American scholars with a professional interest and training in Eastern cultures and religions, and the introduction of such courses in Asian civilizations is the wave of the immediate future in colleges and universities... .Paperback trade in university book stores, and even at the corner drug stores, is brisk in such items as the Eastern—influenced poetry of Ginsberg and Snyder, the Zen-permeated novels of Kerouac and Salinger, the popular Eastern-religious essays of Watts, do-it-yourself Yogist manuals, and the transcendental-meditation-inspired record of the Beatles. Such recently esoteric terms as *nirvana, dharma* (bums), *karma, satori,* 'the sound of one hand clapping' and the like, have become almost household words.[7]

Since a literary artist is more sensitive than a common man, he cannot escape being influenced by such a widespread disillusionment and quest for substitutes. Consequently, a number of religious writers have emerged on the literary horizon of America. Some of them are Robert Pen Warren, Jessamyn West, J.F. Powers, Harry Sylvaster, and Paul Horgan. John Updike's name can be added to this list as he too expresses his disgust with the materialism of the scientific and technological progress of his country and projects a favour for the revival of Christianity with its pristine religiousness.[8] In this respect he has been influenced by such theologians and thinkers as Karl Barth, Reinhold Neibuhr, and Paul Tillich, and the influence of Karl Barth has been more dominant. The literary artists who have influenced Updike are T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Salinger, Hawthorne, and Melville. But Updike has blended all these influences into an integrated vision and has made them his own.

Reinhold Niebuhr has shaped Updike's thinking a great deal. Updike's first novel *The Poorhouse Fair* is an evidence of Niebuhr's deep influence on him. Reinhold Niebuhr holds that Christianity alone can regenerate western civilization. According to him: "There are resources in the Christian religion which

make it the inevitable basis for any spiritual regeneration of western civilization.... The task of redeeming Western society rests in a peculiar sense upon Christianity."[9] Updike depicts this view chiefly in *The Poorhouse Fair* though he comes back to it in many of his other works too [see *infra*]. Neibuhr attacked the optimistic American progress philosophy several decades ago when it was still largely unchallenged, from two positions : first, from his widened Christian understanding of sin, and then also from the standpoint of Biblical eschatology.10 Likewise, Updike, in *The Poorhouse Fair* gives the criticism of rationalistic materialism according to which the natural order is of primary, if not exclusive, significance.[11] This is based ultimately on the Christian doctrine of man which finds reflection in Niebuhr's "continuous criticism of liberal progressivism which assumes that history is itself redemptive of Communist utopianism, of optimistic political pacifism, of projects of world government which are set forth as solutions, by constitutional flat, of international problems."[12]

In order to make a creative use of this philosophical view Updike has borrowed various devices from T.S. Eliot.[13] Dostoevski, B.F. Skinner, Hawthorne and James Joyce. In giving vent to scorn for secularism Updike is indebted to T.S. Eliot. Pointing to Eliot's scorn for secularism Sidney Finklestein remarks : "A prime word of scorn in his vocabulary is 'secular' or 'secularism', whether referring to art or to thought; that is, an attention to real life as it is with a humanist interest in social welfare and progress."[14] T.S. Eliot himself wrote in "Faith that Illuminates" in 1935 : "The whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call secularism...it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life : of something that I assume to be our primary concern."[15] As a matter of fact this rejection of humanism in favour of religion came to Eliot from Hulme whom Eliot quotes as sacred authority in his essay "Humanism": "I hold the religious conception of ultimate values to be right, the humanist wrong....What is important, is what nobody seems to realize—the dogmas like that of Original Sin which are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude. That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection. It is not, then, that I put up with

the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma."[16]

In *The Poorhouse Fair*, John Updike presents a secular utopia, as Huxley does in *Brave New World* and Orwell in *1984*, and illustrates how the secular approach has made life sterile. He presents a welfare state in this novel and examines it through the poorhouse which is one of its agencies. The poorhouse is a kind of home for those people who are financially unable to provide for themselves in their old age. Conner, the prefect of this house, is a humanist and has no faith in God.[17] But Conner's secular poorhouse with its promises of salvation through social and economic success is nothing more than a prison. In this world, where only economic progress matters, man's spirit is starved. Consequently, the inmates express an outright condemnation of the secular ways and ideals.[18] The novelist suggests that the lack of spiritual ideals makes a society sterile.[19]

The Poorhouse Fair testifies also to the fact that Updike has been influenced by Hawthorne. Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* is partly a satire on the experiment in primitive socialism undertaken at Brook Farm in the early 1940's by a group of New England Transcendentalists. So is *The Poorhouse Fair.* As in Hawthorne's novel there is Hollingworth, the self-centred philanthropist, in *The Poorhouse Fair* we have Conner, his counterpart. The fair arranged at the poorhouse has close resemblance with Hawthorne's masquerade in which the inhabitants make well-meant endeavours to cut adrift from the evils of the world. The poorhouse inmates in Updike's novel sell their handicrafts as the inhabitants in Hawthorne's novel sell their produce. Hollingsworth has a crack-brained scheme to found an institution for the reform of criminals. Conner's conception of a waste-free heaven is equally crack-brained.[20]

B.F. Skinner, who in his *Walden Two* envisions a paradise of experimentally conditioned people living together in perfect harmony and happiness, inspired John Updike to show the undesirable side of the welfare state. Individual expression and art proliferate at *Walden Two*.[21] The author considerably emphasizes the importance of these two in the ideal society. Every detail in this utopia is synonymous with order. The author suggests that conditioning is a panacea for the human race and makes a supreme humanistic gesture to the suffering world.

In *The Poorhouse Fair* Conner tries his utmost to bring order and security. But 'bringing order' for the inmates means 'changing the world into a slaughterhouse'.[22]

So far as the use of language is concerned Updike is greatly influenced by James Joyce. Like Joyce he uses lyrical language and employs a wealth of words to describe even the events which are purely internal and the deeds that are merely talk.[23] Joyce composed his novels as carefully as great poets compose their poems. He created beauty with all the resources of word, rhythm, and tone. That is why, as W.Y. Tindall points out, "his novels are more like poems or symphonies or statues than like ordinary novels.[24] Updike learnt the art of using lyrical language from Joyce and acknowledged it.[25] He employs it not only in *The Poorhouse Fair* but also in his other works.[26]

The Poorhouse Fair is also an evidence of Dostoevski's influence on Updike. Dostoevski derides science, social reform, liberalism, socialism and the theories of material progress. His answer is a religious one and rests on faith in a God who bids man to live with love for all people.[27] If one expresses this love, he believes, others will respond to it, as he shows them responding to the saintly Alyosha in *The Brothers Karamazov.* What Dostoevski shows in this novel also finds projection in *The Poorhouse Fair.* Updike's Conner is another Ivan, the brother of Dmitri. As Ivan is a rationalist and convinced atheist who is presented by Dostoevski as a cold intellectual advocate of progress, devoid of human sympathies, so is Conner.[28] Through Father Zossima Dostoevski presents the view that science cannot look beyond what is perceptible by the senses and that it rejects the spiritual world altogether. The view that is preached in the book is that to abandon faith in God is to abandon all bases for morality. The world of Conner in *The Poorhouse Fair* is again secular and devoid of faith—a state of affairs with which the inmates are disgusted. Mendelssohn resembles Father Zossima because he is portrayed as a religious-minded man and a sincere devotee of God.[29]

Karl Barth is Updike's favourite theologian and the novelist accepted it in an interview.[30] Karl Barth rejects natural or philosophic theology which holds that man possesses a capacity to know God through his own efforts and assumes "'a general revelation' whereby at least some rudimentary knowledge of God is accessible to every man.[31] While rejecting it Karl Barth observes:

> Natural theology works out the knowledge of God that is possible and real on the basis of this independent union with God, and its consequences for the whole relationship of God, world and man. It is a necessary understanding in the sphere of man as such—presupposing that there is a sphere and that it can therefore be the object of serious consideration. Whatever we may think of its character as reality or illusion, this sphere arises and exists in the fact that man depends on himself over against God, God becomes unknowable to him and he makes himself equal to God. For the man who refuses his grace God becomes the substance of the highest rate that he himself can see, choose, create and be. It is of this that he gives an account in natural theology. He must do it, because that is the self-exposition and self-justification of the being of man in this sphere.[32]

He holds that man cannot approach God with his own efforts and "God is to be known only through God Himself.[33] According to him grace is inaccessible for man without Jesus Christ:

> Apart from and without Jesus Christ we can say nothing at all about God and man and their relationship one with another. Least of all can we say that their relationship can be presupposed as that of a covenant of grace. Just because it is a covenant of grace it cannot be discovered by man, nor can it be demonstrated by man. As the covenant of grace it is not amenable to any kind of human reflection or to any questions asked by man concerning the meaning and basis of cosmos or history. Grace is inaccessible to us : how else can it be grace? Grace can only make itself accessible.[34]

Barth, while making violent attacks on the natural theology, explains that the danger of the attempts to formulate a reasonable Christianity is threefold : intellectual, ethical and soteriological.[35] First, there is the danger that man will identify human conclusions with the Word of God and thus destroy the validity of the concept of revelation which is God's self manifestation and owes nothing to human initiatives. Secondly, it is likely that

the Church may simply reflect the social and cultural situation, lose its power of criticism and prophetic function, and consequently fail to guide men properly in the matters of ethics. Thirdly, the attempt to identify a human conclusion with God's Word is an instance of the refusal to accept that the only justification is by grace.[36] Barth stresses that theological exposition should be basically independent of human speculations. He reinforces it with his interpretation of the concept of the Fall that since man has fallen as a result of the sin of disobedience, it is impossible for him to discover any truth about God through his own reason.[37]

Updike depicts this view of Barth mainly in *Rabbit, Run,* his second novel, by presenting a natural theologian in Harry Angstrom and reiterates it in *Couples* and *Rabbit Redux.*[38] He illustrates that man goes into the darkness of sin if he converts theology into ideology. He portrays some characters obeying their natural light or reason and, consequently, heading towards damnation. He illustrates all the three dangers that Barth explains. He shows how natural theology takes man to identify his conclusions with the *Word of God;* makes the Church reflect the social and cultural situation and deprives her of prophetic function; and leads man to isolation on account of his refusal to accept that the only justification is by grace.[39]

John Updike suggests his favour for this view not only in his fiction but also in his essays. For instance, in his essay "Faith in Search of Understanding" he explains Barth's theology with approval and states:

> ...Barth's theology is intrinsically scornful of proofs and the kind of metaphysics that admits them....Certainly the traditional proofs, in the light of modern science, are no more than suggestive. The cosmological arguments, which survived the shift from the Ptolemaic to the Newtonian cosmos, is hopelessly strained between the unimaginable macrocosm of super-stellar astronomy and the inscrutable microcosm of particle physics. And the teleological argument (i.e. many things e.g., the human eye—are intricately designed for purposive ends; *ergo,* a directing Intelligence exists) was administered a mortal blow when Darwin demonstrated how the organic

> world, for all its seemingly engineered complexity, might be a self-winnowing chaos.[40]

In giving this view a fictional shape Updike employs the techniques of Salinger and Melville. Updike acknowledges in an interview that he was influenced by both these writers.[41] Harry Angstrom of *Rabbit, Run* is shown behaving much like Salinger's Holden Caulfield and Melville's Captain Ahab. Likewise, the dilemma that Harry faces closely resembles the dilemmas faced by Caulfield and Ahab.

Salinger in *Catcher in the Rye* presents a dilemma in terms of the adolescent passing into adulthood. Updike presents a similar dilemma, though it has been caused by spiritual confusion, in terms of a youngman who never passes out of adolescence. The social backgrounds which Harry and Caulfield face are much alike. In Rabbit, Run Updike portrays the behaviour of a man who challenges the established order. But he does it in such a way that it suggests a disparagement of this behaviour. Both Holden Caulfield and Harry Angstrom are picaro-pilgrims and wander through chaos. Holden does not know what exactly he wants out of life. He pays no attention to the advice of his parents and teachers. He hates New York City, with its taxi-cabs, Madison Avenue buses, elevators and fashion-loving people. Harry is disgusted with his surroundings so much that he leaves his town and drives to the "South" which he finds to be equally disgusting. Holden's teachers think of expelling him from the school, while Harry's is a case of self-imposed exile and Eccles tries to bring him back home. As Holden's is a case of psychological estrangement, so is Harry's. Holden has an unrest within, the real nature of which, he knows, he does not know. Harry also finds himself estranged from his wife, parents, wife's parents, beloved and priest. As Holden, while spending the Christmas holidays in a wild mood in New York City has a prostitute in a hotel-room supplied by an elevator-operator pimp, Harry Angstrom too while on his self-imposed exile into nowhere-and-back gets a prostitute who is supplied to him by his old teacher. Holden feels he is lonesome and in his desperation he is lost. Harry too is led to a similar desperation. Holden visits an English teacher who had once given him friendly encouragement. Harry goes to his

old basketball teacher for advice. Holden's teacher follows his advice with homosexual advances. Tothero, takes Harry to Ruth where the advances are hetero-sexual. In each of the cases it is the sick attempting to cure the sick. Both Harry and Holden are completely alienated. Holden's parents, teachers and, in fact, all who are beyond his generation, both mentally and spiritually, are in a world which is different from his own. So is the case with Harry.

Likewise, Harry has much affinity with Melville's Captain Ahab *(Moby Dick)*. Ahab is guilty of a distorted self-reliance and the novelist illustrates that "death-spiritual, emotional and physical—is the price of self-reliance when it is pushed to the point of solipsism, where the world has no existence apart from the all—sufficient self.[42] So is the case with Updike's Harry who is driven mad like Captain Ahab. Captain Ahab refuses to believe that the evils of the world cannot be eradicated by a man who is determined enough and will travel far enough to find and destroy them. With a slight difference Rabbit refuses to believe that he cannot found a new religion which has 'Be Yourself" for its motto. Both Ahab and Rabbit challenge God. Captain Ahab seeks to destroy the evil which is a part of His creation. It means that he is assuming himself to be as great as God Himself and therefore able to call God to account. Rabbit's effort at founding a new religion is likewise a challenge to Christ.[43]

In his attitude to the Church Updike is again influenced by Karl Barth. Karl Barth's view about the Church is that its primary function is to proclaim the World of God. If it succeeds in the fulfilment of the service, as an ambassador, entrusted to it, it is doing its duty. According to him : "The Church lives as other communities live but in its Church service its nature appears—proclamation of the Word of God, administration of the Sacraments, a more or less developed liturgy, the application of a Church law..., and lastly theology.[44] If it fails in doing this, it stands in need of reforms. Karl Barth maintains:

> The Church runs like a herald to deliver the message. It is not a snail that carries its little house on its back and is so well off in it, that only now and then it sticks out its feelers, and then thinks that the 'claim of publicity'

> has been satisfied. No, the Church lives by its commission as herald; it is *la compagnie de Dieu*. Where the Church is living, it must ask itself whether it is serving this commission or whether it is a purpose in itself. If the second is the case, then as a rule it begins to smack of the 'sacred' to affect piety, to play the priest and to mumble.[45]

Updike posits his belief in this theory by depicting broadly two kinds of churchmen in his works: those who make it their primary duty to proclaim the *Word of God* and lead people to the Christian doctrine and those who fail in fulfilling this task. He does so in both his novels and stories by giving the details of the ways of the churchmen who figure in his *Rabbit, Run, The Centaur, Of the Farm, Couples,* and several short stories.[46] Kruppenbach of *Rabbit, Run* and the Lutheran pastor of *Of the Farm* stand true to the definition of a true priest as given by Barth : ".... the priest, in the midst of men, is the man in whom appears, as if personified, man such as he ought to have been: he who stands upright before God, who obtains God's grace, who gives God what God wills."[47] But the priests like Reverend March and Reverend Horace Pedrick are ludicrous.

The Christianity that Updike depicts in his works is, likewise, Barthian. Explaining the characteristics of a good Christian, Barth states: "....The Christian is a little Jesus Christ : by confessing the name of Jesus Christ, he repeats the office of prophet. By offering himself in sacrifice, he repeats the office of priest. By fighting against sin with a free conscience, he repeats the office of king."[48] He believes that a true Christian should live like Christ, rather than lead a life of sloth. He states: ".... grace means not to lie on a chaise longue but to receive a motion. Of course, a specific difference persists between Christ and his own. Yet the office of Christ is being repeated through his own. To receive Christ is by the same token to be placed in the situation of a follower of Christ. A follower and not an imitator. To follow is to do *after* him. To imitate would be to do *as* he did. The Christian can then do only what Christ did before him : he will not do it with the same significance."[49] It is in *The Centaur* that Updike portrays a Christian of this sort. It is George Caldwell who follows Jesus Christ and sacrifices

himself for mankind. The novelist suggests his approval of George's ways by making him attain God's grace which is shown in a symbolic way at the end of the novel.[50]

Karl Barth rejects Calvin's theory of unconditional election according to which mankind is divided into two sections: the Elect and the non-Elect. This theory of Calvin is explained by Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards in the following words: "God, under no obligation to save anyone, saves, or 'elects' when he will, with no reference to faith or good works. Since all things are present in the mind of God at once, He knows beforehand who will be saved; and thus election or reprobation is predestined. But no man can share in this foreknowledge and all must assent to the Divine Will."[51] Karl Barth does not accept this theory. According to him God's grace is not meant only for a few. He, while stressing the universality of grace, affirms : "....it is grace intended for the whole world, since it is grace"[52] and indicts the theory of 'the elect and the non-elect'. Updike affirms his faith in this view of Karl Barth in *The Centaur*[53].

The technique and fictional devices employed in *The Centaur* again manifest that the novelist has been deeply influenced by T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. In this novel Updike employs the Mann-Joyce-Eliot technique of the mythical parallelism. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a highly allusive book. And so is Thomas Mann's Felix Krull. In *The Centaur* the myth is humanized just as the routine affairs of Olinger are apotheosised. The mythical dimension is masterfully liberated from literary mustiness. In itself the blend of the mythical and the topical is an accomplished *tour de force,* full of comic surprises. Updike employs it in order to suggest a spiritual meaning through the story of a science teacher. The novelist owes a great deal to James Joyce who in *Ulysses* makes the Greek myth of Homer's *Odyssey* furnish the symbolic narrative. Joyce models his novel on an ancient myth for the purpose of enlightening the contemporary situation. Each of the characters in *Ulyssess* corresponds to one of Homer's. Bloom is *Ulysses,* Stephen is Telemachus and Mrs. Bloom, who stays at home with the suitors, is Penelope. Mrs. Bloom's concern with metempsychosis supports the Homeric parallel by suggesting that Joyce's characters are the reincarnations of Homer's. Like *Odyssey, Ulysses* is divided into three parts: the hunt of Telemachus for his father, the wanderings of Odysseus, and the return to Ithaca. Each episode of *Ulysses*

corresponds to some episode of the *Odyssey,* though the order of incidents has been changed. In the same way Updike's *The Centaur* has a mythical parallel. All the characters are the incarnations of the mythological figures. George Caldwell is Chiron, the teacher of the gods, and Peter, his son, is Prometheus. In the Greek legend Chiron, the most learned and innocent of the centaurs, was wounded in his cave by a poisoned arrow intended for another centaur who had disrupted the boar-hunt of Hercules. Chiron tortured by this underserved wound, sacrificed his immortality to expiate the sin of Prometheus who had stolen fire from the gods and given it to man. Here George Caldwell gets a wound in his leg by an arrow shot by one of his students. He also sacrifices himself by going back to the drudgery of work. As in the legend an eagle came to eat Prometheus' liver, in the novel psoriasus afflicts Peter. In the legend Zeus rewarded Chrion for his sacrifice by placing him among the stars as the constellation Sagittarius. George of *The Centaur* is, likewise, rewarded, though the reward that he gets has not been mentioned explicitly. In this novel Zeus becomes Zimmermann, the lecherous Principal of Olinger High School, Hepestus reappears as a garage operator, Apollo as a country doctor, and Hermes as a bum. Daedalus, Io, Pandora and Hercules figure as Peter's school mates. Thus Updike finds a mythical parallel for every character in the story or a contemporary parallel for every god in the myth.

Karl Barth believes that one, in order to attain salvation54, has to hold entirely to God's Word. He maintains: "...faith is concerned with our holding to God *exclusively,* because God is the One who is faithful. There is also human faithfulness, a faithfulness of God, which may look at us out of His creatures and rejoice and strengthen us; but where such faithfulness exists, its basis will always be the faithfulness of God".[55] He does not allow a man to accept any other theology. He contends:

> Faith is not concerned with a special realm, that of religion, say, but with real life in its totality, the outward as well as the inward question, that which is bodily as well as that which is spiritual the brightness as well as the gloom in our life. Faith is concerned with our being permitted to rely on God as regards ourselves and also

> as regards what moves us on behalf of others, of the whole of humanity; it is concerned with the whole of living and the whole of dying. The freedom to have this trust (understood in this comprehensive way) is faith."[56]

This view implies complete distrust of all the spiritual views other than the one based on the Bible. It goes against the oriental doctrines like Zen-Buddhism and Yoga, and the occidental views like the Beat philosophy.[57] That is why Updike suggests rejection of all these views in his novels. The salvation-through-sex doctrine is taken up in *Couples* and the oriental philosophies of Zen-Buddhism and *Yoga* in *Rabbit Redux*. He portrays the votaries of these philosophies as sinners rather than as God's devotees or saints.[58]

Of the Farm again testifies to the fact that Karl Barth's theology (see *supra*) influenced Updike a great deal. This novel is an objective correlative of Barth's view of woman. Updike makes the Lutheran pastor quote this theologian and uphold his view: "Karl Barth, the great theologian of our friendly rivals the Reformed Church, says of Woman: 'Successfully or otherwise, she is in her whole existence an appeal to the kindness of Man'. An appeal to the kindness of Man, 'For kindness' he goes on to say, 'belongs originally to his particular responsibility as a man'. Belongs originally : since the beginning, since God breathed life into the nostrils of the dust and 'man became a living soul".[59] In this novel Updike portrays the ill-effects that follow the disobedience of this view.[60]

In this depiction of widespread boredom and death-consciousness in *Couples* Updike is influenced by Paul Tillich.[61] According to Paul Tillich human mind is "a permanent factory of fear—the first in order to escape God, the second in order to escape anxiety; and, there is a relation between the two, for facing the God who is really God means facing also the threat of non-being."[62] According to him there are three types of anxiety because non-being threatens man in three directions. Non being, as Tillich opines, threatens man's self-affirmation in terms of fate and death, his spiritual self-affirmation in terms of emptiness and meaninglessness, and his moral self-affirmation in terms of guilt and condemnation. That is way the three anxieties that man faces are the anxieties of death,

meaninglessness and condemnation.[63] All these anxieties are depicted in *Couples*. The couples find boredom in life and resort to the violation of morality in order to get rid of it. Immoral behaviour pricks the conscience of Piet and he is afraid of Calvinistic God who, he feels, will punish him for his misdeeds.[64]

Couples again displays that Hawthorne has influenced Updike a great deal. This influence is perceivable both in the theme and its treatment. Perhaps it was the advice of Norman Mailer[65] that carried Updike, in *Couples,* deeper into the depiction of sex. The themes dealt with here are those to which Hawthorne insistently returns—human depravity, guilty deeds and thoughts, and punishment and atonement. There is a close resemblance between the society depicted in *Couples* and the one depicted in Hawthorne's *The Maypole of Merry Mount*. In Hawthorne's novel *Merry Mount* is a semi-mythical place where the pagan gods of Old England briefly renew their sway. Its colonists are frivolous Arcadians, votaries of the Lord of Misrule. So is the case with the couples in *Couples*. They are hedonists and commit adultery like Hawthorne's characters. Hawthrone's Maypole festival is dreamlike, its people are the similitudes of men and women, its properties are theatrical : jest and delusion, trick and fantasy. They are visionary and unreal. It is secretly watched by a group of Puritans who liken the celebration to those devils and ruined souls with whom their superstition peopled the black wilderness. The hedonistic life of the couples in Couples is, likewise, watched by the 'weathercock'. In Hawthorne's novel people headed by Governor Endicott attack the community; its depthless montage collapses before these 'ironmen' and their 'sterner faith'; the Maypole is shattered and the settlement disbanded; the mockery life dissolves and the old gods are deposed. In *Couples* it is 'God's lightning' that has to interfere and set the things right.[66]

Updike has fashioned Piet and Foxy after Hawthorne's May Lord and May Lady. The May Lord and the May Lady in Hawthorne's novel undergo a metamorphosis of disillusionment. Genuine love springs up between them and then comes a shower of withering rose leaves from the Maypole. They become sensible of something vague and unsubstantial in their former pleasures and feel a dreamy presentiment of inevitable change. At the end of *Couples* too the couples resolve to change their ways of

life; Piet and Foxy are divorced, become husband and wife, instead of lovers, and leave Tarbox. Finally, as with Hawthorne, Updike's territory is the human soul, not in isolation or only in its transcendent relations, but in the bearings of social life.

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3. *Ibid.*
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8. See Chapter VII.
9. *Does Civilization Need Religion?*, (New York : Macmillan, 1927), p. 235.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 200 ff.
11. See Chapter III.
12. John C. Bennett, "Reinhold's Social Ethics", *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious Social and Political Thought*, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York : Macmillan, 1956), p. 49.
13. Updike is a great admirer of T.S. Eliot. On Eliot's death he wrote : "The death of T.S. Eliot deprives the English-speaking world not of a literary master—he exists in his work and will continue to exist—but of a cultural presence that united two literatures and extended the venerable tradition of the presiding poet-critic into the present time. He was our Dryden, our Coleridge, our Arnold; and as long as he was alive our literature seemed in some sense restrained from the apocalyptic formlessness and obscenity that it seeks" [*Assorted Prose* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1965), p. 99].
14. *Existentialism and Alienation in American Literature* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), p. 173.
15. *Selected Prose*, ed. J. Heywood (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1955), pp. 41-42.
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17. See Chapter III.
18. See Chapter III.

19. In *The Waste Land* Eliot depicts a secular society which is sterile on account of the loss of religion. Discussing it F.R. Leavis observes : "Sex here is sterile, breeding not life and fulfilment but disgust, accidia and unanswerable questions. It is not easy to-day to accept the perpetuation and multiplication of life as ultimate ends" [*New Bearings in English Poetry* (London : Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 93]. Jesus too, while on his way to Calvary, described a sterile society and said to the "Daughters of Jerusalem" :
"For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.
Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.
For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry" [St. Luke, 23 : 29-31].
20. See Chapter III.
21. The utopian society depicted in *Walden Two* is based on the argument : "Political action was of no use in building a better world, and men of good will had better turn to other measures as soon as possible. Any group of people could secure economic self-sufficiency with the help of modern technology, and the psychological problems of group living could be solved with available principles of 'behavioral engineering'" [*Walden Two* (New York : Macmillan, 1972), p. 14].
22. See Chapter III.
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35. *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I, editor-in-chief Paul Edwards (New York : The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 249.
36. *Ibid.*
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38. See Chapter VI.
39. *Ibid.*
40. *Assorted Prose* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1965), pp. 213-14.
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43. See Chapter VI.
44. *Dogmatics in Outline*, trans. G.T. Thomson (London : S.C.M. Press, 1966), p. 146.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
46. See Chapter V.
47. *The Faith of the Church : A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed* ed. Jean-Louis Leuba, tarns. Gabriel Vahanian (London : Collins, Fontana Books, 1967), p. 58.
48. *The Faith of the Church : A Commentary of the Apostles' Creed* (London : Collins, Fontana Books, 1967), p. 55.
49. *Ibid.*
50. See Chapter VII.
51. *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought*(New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 21.
52. *The Faith of the Church* (London : Collins, 1967), p. 53.
53. See Chapter VII.
54. "Salvation comes with the restoration of the vision of God to man, and the reflected image of God in him. It is less the establishment of innocence from transgression than the granting to the self of ability to move again toward perfection, toward the actualization of the power by which it is enabled to see God and to live in his likeness. Salvation is the restoration of the goal that had been lost and so also the healing of the diseased powers" [M. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self : An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York : Evanston and London : Harper and Row, 1963), p. 133].
55. *Dogmatics in Outline* (London : S.C.M. Press, 1968), p. 21.
56. *Ibid.*
57. See Chapters IV and VI.

58. *Ibid.*
59. *Of the Farm* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 133.
60. See Chapter III.
61. It is so inspite of the fact that he disparages Tillich's lectures collected in *Morality and Beyond* and observes : "The myth of the Fall, by which traditional Christianity explained Man's estrangement from his created nature, Tillich rather individually reads to mean that Adam had lost innocence *before* the temptation of Jehovah's prohibition, and already stood on a boundary of 'desire' between guilt and innocence.... Yet the net effect is one of ambiguity, even futility—as if the theologian were trying to revivify the Christian corpse with transfusions of Greek humanism, German metaphysics, and psychoanalytical theory. Terms like 'grace' and 'Will of God' walk through these pages as bloodless ghosts, transparent against the milky background of 'beyond' and 'being' that Tillich, God Forbid, would confuse with the Christian faith" [*Assorted Prose* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1965), pp. 219-20].
62. *The Courage To Be* (Digswell Place : James Nisbet, 1961), p. 37.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
64. See Chapter IV.
65. Norman Mailer wrote in his essay 'Some children of the Goddess': "[Updike] could become the best of our literary novelists if he could forget about style and go deeper into the literature of sex" [*Contemporary American Novelists*, ed. Harry T. Moore (Carbondale : Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 17].
66. See Chpater IV.

3

Recoil from Materialism

Updike's works reflect an indictment of the Puritan assumption that "prosperity...[is] a pretty sure indication of Divine favor"[1] and display the kinship of his view, in this respect, with Emerson's Transcendentalism which posits its belief in "the importance of spirit over matter and an ascending hierarchy of the spiritual values...."[2] Updike depicts materialism[3] to be a way to sin[4], rather than a way to God. This view finds reflection in Updike's works chiefly in two ways : first, the champions of materialism in his novels are shown succumbing to sin; and, second, the secular societies depicted in them are presented as the homes of vices[5].

The chief champions of materialism in the Updike world are Conner in *The Poorhouse Fair*, Tothero in *Rabbit, Run*, and Skeeter in *Rabbit Redux*. They stand for different aspects of this matter-centred philosophy : Conner supports the ideals of a welfare state, Tothero stresses body-centred education and Skeeter chooses to be a dialectic-materialist. The approach of all these characters to the questions of life—including those of transcendence—is secular.[6] What matters for them is this world, this body and the affairs of this life. They have nothing to do with what is 'beyond' and have no faith in either the existence of God or any theology.

The novelist indicates that Conner is an atheist by making him think "of no one as God[7] and regard the word "God" as a "hollow noun".[8] Likewise, he is shown rejecting all the Christian concepts[9] like those of heaven, hell and morality in his discussion with Hook and the other inmates whom he is trying to argue into atheism.[10] His rejecting the Christian concept of soul is explicitly testified to by his statement : "We've sifted the body in a dozen directions, looking for a soul. Instead we've found what [*sic*]? A dog's bones, an ape's glands, a few quarts of sea water, a rat's nervous system, and a mind that is actually a set of electric circuits."[11]

It signifies that he possesses a scientific temperament "with its restless intellectual questioning, its reluctance to accept anything on trust, and to its capacity to doubt [which] has been the spur to all adventure and experiment."[12] It is only the scientific truth, rather than a dogma, that is acceptable to him. Since science is unable to find any evidence of the existence of the soul, he refuses to accept its existence.

Conner's thinking, as depicted in this novel, is narrowly materialistic. It is the handmaid of the cause of secularization—a process that Harvey Cox describes as "the loosing of the world from religious and quasi-religious understandings of itself, the dispelling of all closed world views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbol."13 The concepts of heaven, hell, sin and salvation have no transcendental meaning for him. He has liberated himself from all religious and metaphysical tutelage. He has turned his attention away from the other world and has directed it to this one. When he is asked to give his conception of heaven he pictures a prosperous society[14] which is free from suffering, disease, political and economic oppression, waste, squalor, lack of planning, poverty, pain, hunger for power, every form of struggle, and every other factor that warps human mind and stunts his body, but where one enjoys ample of leisure, recreation, order, beauty, longevity, economic prosperity,[15] free growth, sanity and every kind of fulfilment.[16] His heaven has nothing to do with the Christian heaven which is inherited by "the meek", "the poor in spirit", "the merciful", "the pure in heart" and those "who are persecuted for rightousness' sake".[17] It is earthly in every respect. As the "scientific and technological view of life places high—

indeed, central—value upon reason, prediction, order and conscious control;....requires looking ahead, [and] planning...."[18] So is the case with Conner's outlook.

His belief in the organic theory of the universe that the old institutions, in their dying, can make the chemical world fertile,[19] his support for the "cleansing wars" and "sweeping purges",[20] and his focussing his attention on the economic welfare of the people[21] evidence the fact that he is one of those materialists whom T.S. Eliot disparages in his essay "Religion in Literature" when he says: "There are a very large number of people in the world today who believe that all ills are fundamentally economic. Some believe that various specific economic changes alone would be enough to set the world right; others demand more or less drastic changes in the social life....These changes demanded, and in some places carried out, are alike in one respect, that they hold the assumptions of what I call Secularism : they concern themselves only with the changes of a temporal, material and external nature; they concern themselves with morals only of a collective nature."[22]

Conner is also presented as a humanist as he has dedicated himself to the service of humanity and has vowed to bring order and beauty in society. His positing full trust in the ideals and values of the welfare state testifies to his humanism. His altruism is responsible for his zeal to reform the world. It finds expression in his efforts to improve the conditions of the poorhouse. When he joined this house as its prefect he found it badly in need of order : ".... the outbuildings were crammed with refuse and filth...half the country home acres were lying fallow, [and] waste...The west wing was a death trap."[23] But now, as a result of his admirable efforts, it "has one of the five highest ratings in the north-eastern sector."[24] It is he alone who is responsible for the remarkable increase in the amenities available to the inmates of this poorhouse. That is why he repeatedly boasts of his success and takes pride in it. Moreover, he strives to make it a more comfortable place and makes changes in the existing practices according to the needs of the people. He gets name-plates fixed on the chairs so that the inmates may have a sense of ownership. Likewise, he takes care of the health of the inmates and gives them medical aid whenever necessary. It is his care that saves Hook from death[25] and sends Lucas to the hospital to get rid of the earache.[26]

However, his attention is confined to the physical comforts of the inmates and, what Reinhold Niebuhr describes as, "the pursuing of the immediate goals of life, without asking them too many ultimate questions about the meaning of life and without being too disturbed by the tragedies and antinomies of life."[27] Though he cannot bear to see the inmates standing in an "exposed" position,[28] or sitting in a "damp and chilled" room[29] and tries to make them feel that the poorhouse belongs to them and that they do not depend on his "mercy",[30] he refuses to sympathise with their views and queries about the other world, and the questions of theism and salvation.[31] His efforts to justify his secular outlook and to show them the temptations of a pleasure-based thinking are, obviously, an illustration of his secular thinking. As humanitarianism is marked by "the official attitude of ignoring God and... the bringing down of heaven to earth by the erection of the Welfare State, a watered down version of the Messianic Kingdom"[32] so is the case with Conner's philosophy.

The debate between Conner and Hook33 indicates that Conner's approach is diametrically opposed to that of Hook. Hook represents the Christian approach with its absolute spiritual values, and belief in the supernatural phenomena and the dignity of man[34] while Conner represents the scientific humanist's attitude as he believes only in that which is empirically established and scientifically possible. Hook believes in a benevolent God while Conner's God is 'Accident'.[35] Conner's attitude is the attitude of an empiricist.36

Tothero too, like Conner, is an irreligious person. He does not allow any other-worldly thought to permeate his thinking. God never existed in his world.37 While giving training to his pupils he focusses his attention on their bodies. He explains his strategy to Margaret and Ruth in Harry's presence : "The coach....is concerned with developing the three tools we are given in life; the head, the body and the heart...work the boys into condition. Make their legs hard.... Hard. Run, run, run. Run every minute their feet are on the floor. You can't run enough."[38] This is a symbolic description of his body-centered vision. It is further suggested through his speeches concerning the ways one should adopt in life : he believes that "right and wrong [are not] dropped from the sky" but are made by the

human beings themselves;[39] likewise, while advising Harry about his future course of action, he presents human heart as man's sole authority.[40] No religion ever allows a man to trust his own heart. "Religion... is opposed to the spirit of science. The method of science is empirical while that of religion is dogmatic... If we esteem freedom of inquiry, we find that it is incompatible with authoritarianism, which is the dominant feature of religion."[41] Since Tothero challenges the authoritarianism, he cannot be considered a religious man.

Secularism changes itself into something violent and dreadful in *Rabbit Redux* where Skeeter champions the cause of anti-Christianity.[42] Skeeter not only refuses to accept Christ as the Son of God but also considers Christianity to be a religion of the exploiters and a method of exploitation of the blacks by the whites.[43] Like Satan[44] he denounces God in filthy language: "Hey. Rabbit. Jill says you believe in God. I got news for you. Your God's pansy. Your white God's queerer than the Queen of Spades. He sucks off the Holy Ghost and makes his son watch. Hey, Chuck. Another thing. Ain't no Jesus. He was a faggot crook, right? They bribed the Romans to get his carcass out of the tomb 'cause it smelled so bad, right?"[45] No other character of Updike denounces God as vehemently as he does. His anti-Christian views also find reflection in his speeches denouncing the Church and wishing that its fragments should be "scattered to the four winds of heaven."[46] His rejecting the biblical 'Big Bang' theory of creation[47] and expressing his faith in the theory that the universe is "in a steady state"[48] further affirm his irreligious approach.

Updike indicates an indictment of all these champions of secularism in several ways. First, he makes all of them yield to sin because "Christian orthodoxy has consistently defined unbelief as the root of the sin, or the sin that precedes pride.[49] Secondly, he depicts them being rejected by other characters or falling victims to God's wrath.

Conner is shown being driven to 'the final vulgarity'—the vulgarity which leads one "to equate the ultimate ends of life with the dubious goal of 'happiness' and to equate happiness with creature comforts."[50] His materialistic philosophy becomes mainly an anti-pain philosophy and degenerates into hedonism. He envisions himself holding a girl by the waist on the seashore.[51] This description symbolizes Conner's yielding to sin[52] because, according to the Christian doctrine, it is a sin to look

on a woman "to lust after her"[53] and Conner goes much farther than that.

His approach is also shown being rejected by the inmates who refuse to be convinced by his belief though he propagates it as zealously as a religious preacher propagates a creed. Neither Hook nor any other inmate shows any sympathy for his immanence-based arguments. Old age has made the questions of hell and heaven more appealing to them than the questions of material prosperity. Since religion alone can answer these questions, mechanical marvels and the security of the welfare state are of no use to them. "Mechanical marvels are all very well, but they cannot satisfy man's inner needs. Man's needs transcend the mechanical, they go beyond the power of a mechanic to satisfy. His deepest needs are, in fact, spiritual".[54] That is the reason why Conner's offer of social security fails to please the inmates whose attention is focussed on the other world.

The rebellion of the inmates against Conner adds to this very effect. None of the inmates has anything to say in support of this champion of secularism. All of them unanimously rise against him. Gregg, the man of passion,[55] feels that Conner's administration is trucking the inmates off to the slaughterhouse.[56] Even a simple woman like Mrs. Mortis is so unhappy with him that she wishes him to be shot dead.[57] The letter Conner receives from a "town person" explicitly expresses the inmates' hatred for this prefect, though it is written in faulty English : "Stephen Conner—Who [*sic*] do you think you are a Big [*sic*] shot? Yr [*sic*] duty is to help not hinder these old people in there [*sic*] way to there [*sic*] finai Reward [*sic*]. I myself have heard bitter complant *[sic]* from these old people when they come into town where I live. They call you Pieface you and that moron [*sic*] Buddy. The nature of there [*sic*] complaints [*sic*] I will disclose latter [*sic*], and will write the U.S. gov.ment [*sic]* depending."[58] The inmates go the extent of stoning him and he has to run away for safety.[59] This incident is again a symbol of the inmates' rejecting Conner's vision of a prosperous future free from gods and suffering.

The novelist rejects Conner's approach also by exposing his weaknesses and making him act against what he professes. Though he champions the cause of humanitarianism, he wishes

to accept mass murder as "the ultimate kindness the enlightened could perform for the others."[60] It is, in fact, surprising that a man who preaches kindness towards the fellow beings also wishes all human beings to be wiped off the globe. It is an evidence of his hypocrisy and manifests that the creed of do-goodism is used by him merely as a mirage to attract followers. Likewise, though he calls impartiality "a crucial virtue".[61] He encourages Lucas to be an informer and makes him his favourite inmate. The *Time* book-reviewer calls Conner a "do-gooder"[62] but the facts mentioned above do not support this statement. They merely show that Conner is a hypocrite using do-goodism as a tact.[63]

David D. Galloway considers Conner a "saint".[64] But, in fact, Conner resembles Satan rather than a saint. It is particularly his preaching for a Godless prosperity and tempting the inmates to accept it at the cost of their religious views and other-worldly thinking [see *supra*] that joins him with Satan who took Jesus Christ into wilderness, and tempted him to desert his mission and to have in exchange the kingdoms of the world and their glory:

> And the devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the Kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.
> And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them : for that is delivered unto me; and to whomever I will give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.[65]

Conner, like the devil, drags the inmates to atheism and mammonism. But the inmates reject all these temptations and the discussion comes to an end with the following words of Hook : "There is no goodness, without belief. There is nothing but busy-ness *[sic]*. And if you have not believed, at the end of your life you shall know you have buried your talent in the ground of this world and have nothing saved, to take into the next."[66]

Here Hook firmly expresses his faith in God's word and transcendence and shows his preference for spiritualism over materialism. It again resembles Christ's rejecting the devil's

worldly temptations : "Get these behind me, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.[67]

Rachael C. Burchard believes that in *That Poorhouse Fair* Updike expresses his faith in a compromise between science and Christianity. She states:

> For both points of view Updike presents a convincing case. It is as if he says, "See, that and that in our heritage we should keep, but *this* in the new culture and *this* are also good. Isn't there some way to keep the best of the old, combine it with the best of the new, and gain a fresh new compound which we have not yet found but which will solve our dilemma?" The thing which is not clear is just which aspects of the new humanism (and science and reason) should replace with factors of the old Christianity. The author seems to cling to his heritage with a deep and tenacious devotion while giving willing ear to a logical, and reasonable contradiction.[68]

However, this view could have been regarded as acceptable if the novelist had shown some compromise between Hook and Conner at the end of the novel. But no such thing happens in this novel. Both Hook and Conner go on justifying their approaches till the end and remain estranged from each other. And since Conner is exposed mercilessly [see *supra*] it cannot be believed that the novelist sympathizes with him or favours his humanism.

Tothero, the second champion of secularism, is rejected with an equal force. The failure of his strategy is glaringly evident in Harry Angstrom whom he calls his "finest athlete".[69] Inspite of the training that Tothero gives him, Harry fails in his life.[70] Tothero makes his pupils run and Harry learns this lesson so faithfully that he starts running whenever he faces an inconvenient situation! What was the greatest strength in the eyes of the coach becomes a fatal flaw in the pupil. If Harry had not been trained by Tothero, he could have fared better in his life, or, at least, he would not have run when he has to face a crisis.

Tothero's leading Harry to Ruth is an illustration of the dangers of the secularization of education against which Reinhold Niebuhr sounds a warning : "...the secularization of education represents a loss for individuals for there is a religious dimension in life, a search for the soul for the point of absolute commitment and submission without which life tends to become stale and meaningless."[71] This action of Tothero symbolically describes that secularism leads man to lechery. Ruth's identification with lechery[72] is suggested in several ways : she is an atheist, has no faith in God or prayer, hates church-going,[73] never worries about the questions of transcendence, sells her body and makes it a means of livelihood, and tempts men to come to her by allowing them to use her body even in the ways in which their wives do not allow them to do.[74] Tothero's position in this situation also resembles that of Satan who tempted man's first parents to commit the sin of disobedience and caused their fall with the result that death and sorrow gripped mankind.[75] Rabbit's last running away from Ruth's apartment resembles Adam's being driven out of the Garden of Eden. The Bible records : "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken."[76] Updike too narrates Harry's running away with a sigh : "He wants to travel to the next patch of snow . . . .His hands lift of their own...he runs. Ah: runs. Runs."[77]

Towards the end of the novel Tothero is shown lying in the hospital in a state of paralysis. He cannot "say a word or move his head more than an inch."[78] This paralysis symbolizes the paralysis of his secular thinking and a description of, what S. Radhakrishnan calls, "the utter absence of thought, benumbed mind and paralysed will"[79] to which he has been driven by his secularism. It merely objectifies the situation that Tothero is conscious of the failure of his strategy in Harry and that he finds himself incapable of suggesting to Harry any other remedy for his spiritual confusion. The irony lies in the fact that the man who considers running to be the best thing for his students finds himself entirely incapable of making any movement.

Moreover, his Godless theories lead Tothero himself to sin.[80] This is signified by his going to Margaret, and submitting to fornication. Thus, Updike depicts, secular philosophy leads not only the pupil but also the teacher to sin.

Since Skeeter is the most violent enemy of Christianity in the Updike world he is also his creator's most depraved character. He is immoral and crazy. Even the society of *Rabbit Redux* regards him as a criminal. He is the incarnation of evil crying for disorder, confusion, violence and death.[81]

Robert Detweiler believes him to be an artistic failure : "As Vietnam war veteran turned anti-war, drugs dealer, self-proclaimed revolutionary, and black messiah, he is an incarnation of the fearful shapes that have transformed the American dream into a nightmare. Because Skeeter is too powerful a creation for the otherwise realistic cast of the novel, his portrayal threatens to unbalance the whole artistic effort."[82] However, if Skeeter is interpreted, as he should be, as Satan, this fear will easily be overcome. As Satan takes the damned souls to hell, so does Skeeter arrive to take Harry, the man in the grip of the sin of lechery (Jill), to the hell of belief in disorder, though he does not succeed in doing it because lechery meets her end and Harry repents[83] on his sinful behaviour.[84]

Then, the "Americas" which Updike depicts in his novels are the homes of secularism. All of them are materially advanced but poor in the matters of religion. Christianity has become outdated for their inhabitants. These "Americans" worship Dollar as a god. They have been enabled by the scientific and technological developments ever to visit the moon. Excepting a few George Caldwells they have no spiritual vision and no worries about the questions of transcendence.

The "America" of *The Poorhouse Fair* is a country which has attained a lot of material progress. Its material progress is suggested by the occasional descriptions of ultra-modern technical devices and social situations : it is a society where social and economic security is provided to the poor and the old who are financially unable to provide for themselves; untiring efforts are being made to remove poverty and to increase production; the state has declared war on suffering;[85] the townsfolk who visit the poorhouse are 'bred within' elegant settlements";[86] motor-cars are run by pure automation;[87] economy has swelled;[88] houses are being built more niggardly;[89] and the markets are hungry for the articles like "trivets, samplers, whale bones, swifts, button hooks, dragware, staffordshire hens, bleeding knives, mechanical apple pares, ferrotypes [and]

weathervane.[90] The poorhouses have a healthy competition to provide better comforts to the inmates and efforts are being made to bring all tidiness and comfort in them. This "America", to use the words of Harvey Cox, is a "place of human control, of rational planning [and] of bureaucratic organization....."[91]

The foundations of this America are laid on atheism. The religious values are treated as outdated and irreligion holds sway. The people holding the reins of the country have exiled God from their affairs and, as Fred Kegerise says, are "trying to do all God's work instead of their own."[92] The noun "God" is "a vast empty place"[93] for boys like David. No reverence is shown to the religious beliefs and rituals. This society can be described well, by employing the words of J.H. Oldham, as "an environment in which it is taken for granted that God is irrelevant."[94]

The atheism of the people in *The Centaur* is conveyed through the debate between Peter and Minor. Minor accuses the communists of not believing in a Divine Creator and Peter counter-attacks him saying :"Well, my God, who does?... You don't, I don't. Nobody does. Really."[95] And, in fact, in this novel nobody but George Caldwell believes in the Christian God. The behaviour of the students towards George Caldwell resembles that of the non-believers towards Jesus Christ in Israel. The Bible records : "And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshipped him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him."[96] The students of Olinger smite and mock Caldwell with an equal cruelty : "Caldwell turned and as he turned his ankle received an arrow. The class burst into laughter. The pain scaled the slender core of his shin, whirled in the complexities of his knee, and, swollen broader, mere thunderous, mounted in his bowels."[97]

It is again a secular society that the novelist depicts in *Couples*. The couples lead a Godless life and constitute a substitute Church,[98] at least in their fancy. They also find secular absolutes—like scientific inquiry and psycho-analysis—to replace religion. The "America" of this novel is an affluent country. Its people can afford to live expensively without vocations.99 Nobody tastes the pangs of poverty. The anti-Christian attitude

of this society is shown by the facts that none of the couples but Piet goes to church and the Lord's Prayer has ben "banned in all public schools.[100]

The "America" of *Rabbit Redux* is more secular and scientifically more advanced than any other 'America' of Updike. There is no church or churchman in this novel. Christian morality is flagrantly flouted by the people of this land. Mim sells her body freely, Janice goes to live with her lover and Harry frequently indulges in adultery. Progress in the field of science and technology has given space-craft to the people of this land and has enabled them to visit the moon.

But all these "Americas" are in a state of ill-health and people inhabiting them are visited by doubts. The loss of Christianity has brought them a total loss of moral values. The life of the people is sinful. Crimes are an everyday phenomenon in them. Quarrels feuds, rapes, cases of adultery, divorces, robberies, and even murders have become a usual affair and have ceased to shock anyone. They are the homes of petrified humanity and the people inhabiting them fear their doom is approaching.

The present-day America is facing numerous problems including "the apparent rising crime rates, rising costs of health care, sordid warehouses for [the] aged, the drug problem, the rise of the anti-hero and dandy as models for the young, [and] empty city treasuries...."[101] Many of these problems are presented as the evidence of the ill-health of Updike's "Americas" too because, as Charles I. Glicksberg points out : "A life that is rooted in negation and rule by a sense of pure contingency, cannot either affirm or create. Contemporary man has lost faith not only in God but also in his own reality. What does this burden of infinite freedom amount to but a dreadful awareness of the nothingness that hems him in on all sides?"[102]

The achievements of the welfare state in *The Poorhouse Fair* are hollow. The loss of God has rendered the skies "blank".[103] the Godless ideals of the social progress have led people to depravity. The people from the town come to the fair to cheat the old artisans, while purchasing their artifacts, the high school students have taken to homosexuality.[104] and little virtue is left.[105]

The inmates of the poorhouse as well as the townsfolk have a nostalgia for the "older America" in which Christianity

reigned. The town people visit the poorhouse mainly to purchase anything savouring of the pre-secular America and to be freshened in their recollection of those happy conditions. They are disgusted with the conditions of the bureaucratic socialism as it has brought boredom for the old people and extermination for the wild life. Hook believes that if the existing conditions continue to prevail, very soon "the sight of a rabbit or squirrel will [become a] rare treat...."[106]

Thus, Updike suggests, the perfection of technological achievement fails to satisfy the spiritual hunger of man and makes him "a depersonalized unit".[107] Jesus promised the advent of the Kingdom of God,[108] but in the utopia of *The Poorhouse Fair* the cataclysm neither has arrived nor is likely to arrive. There is also an irony in the futuristic setting of the novel because though it is set in future it compels one to acknowledge that there is no future for the society which surrenders itself to machine and officialdom.

The wages of secularism in *The Centaur* is two fold: first, this society is a home of disorder and confusion, and secondly, it is visited by God's wrath.[109] George faces unbearable confusion in Olinger High school and calls it a "hate factory".[110] The kids in the school ridicule Caldwell and injure him with arrows. Mercy and charity have deserted this world. It is a hellish world run by self-centred people like Zimmerman who thrives on confusion. It is a place of "waste, rot, hollowness, noise, stench, [and] death."[111] The perfumes, if at all available here, are the ones imported from Asia and the "poisons are native".[112] Even the laughter of the people is poisonous and distils "all the cruelty and blasphemy in the world."[113] This world is a home of shocks, fears, insecurities, and resentments which find projection in the conduct of the people in the form of anxieties, prejudices and conflicts. The school seethes with sex and violence. Zimmerman, the Principal of the school, undresses a girl in the classroom and beds down with a female member on board. The students attempt copulation in the presence of their teacher. Thus morality has deserted this "America".

God's wrath visits the Olinger world in *The Centaur* in the form of a snow storm which is described towards the close of the novel. The curse brings bleakness and sterility to Olinger. It brings with it the castration of the sky and barrenness to Gaia:

> White, she was white, death's own colour, sum of the spectrum, wherever the centaur's eye searched. He wondered, Had *[sic]* not the castration of Sky worked a terrible sterility upon Gaia, though she herself had cried aloud for rescue?
>
> The plants by the side of the road he walked were bare of leaves and sparse in variety. Orchard grass the signature of Ceres, sumac the dermal poison, dogwood whose bark was a mild purge, mulberry and pin oak and choke cherry, staple of hedgerows. Sticks. In this season they were barren of virtue and the ground of blank snow made them calligraphic.[114]

Poor Gaia vainly cries for help! This description of snow-fall symbolizes the sterility that follows, as Jesus predicted,[115] the loss of Christianity. The white colour of snow intensifies the idea of sterility and death.

The "America" of *Couples* is a home of moral degradation in its worst form. In Piet's words it is "like an 'unloved child'" and "God doesn't love [it] anymore."[116] It is described as a "sunken barren world".[117] It is a nation of pleasure-seekers who set Christian morality at naught. All forms of perversion have made it their home.

The "America" of *Rabbit Redux* is a caricature of its old self and sees total disintegration of its ideals. Harry finds himself caught between a stubborn worship of the dream and a first-hand experience of its dissolution. He tries to justify all its ways but the conditions prevailing therein hammer into his mind the truth that it is an entirely depraved and sinful world. Harry who once went to the extent of believing that paradise was possible under the American bombing[118] encounters "rape" scenes in his own house, finds his house almost snatched from him, and finally finds it burning in his presence.

The sin rampant in these secular "Americas" indicates the novelist's belief in the view that it is the loss of religion that is responsible for the ill-health of a society and hence this is something against which a society has to guard itself.[119]

Updike also depicts the dangers of the adoption of the secular approach in the affairs of marriage. He does it mainly in *Of the Farm*. Joey, the protagonist of this novel disregards the

Christian view of marriage and views a marriage in a purely secular way. He goes to the church on Sunday merely to meet his former acquaintances rather than pray. The word 'God' means nothing to him and he regards his mother's religiosity as a weapon of attacking him. He develops an adulterous relationship with Peggy and then marries her after divorcing Joan, his first wife. He violates Jesus Christ's stern warning: "It hath been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."[120] The family Bible in his house rests "neglected heavy as a casket"[121] in a lowly position near the floor. This also indicates that Joey has set Christianity aside and has given himself to secular ways. But on account of his sexual practices he has to undergo a very severe punishment: he loses his children, though he wishes to have them back, his domestic peace and the mutual trust that marks the relationship prevailing between a husband and his wife. His dreams try to bring it home to him that he has been very cruel to his former wife and children. Charlie, his son, appears in his dreams as a bundle lying rejected in his farm.[122]

Updike rejects science more explicitly in Couples. The two sciences which are talked about in this novel are psychiatry and chemistry. Angela, Piet's wife, wishes to go to a psychiatrist; and Ken, Foxy's husband is a research scholar in chemistry. Piet calls psychiatry a "witchcraft" which he believes gives one "pride" and "selfishness".[123] The career of Ken who is bored by Ben's "looking for religious significance" demonstrates how mechanical his life is.[124] His house is a test tube,[125] and, in his wife's words, he is "a real computer".[126] What is indicated here is the view that science makes life mechanical and results in changing men into cogs of a machine, objects and things.

In his poem "W. B. Nimble, V.B. Quick" Updike reiterates that science does not answer the ultimate questions of life and does not suggest any remedy for the enigma of life:

> V.B. Wigglesworth wakes at noon,
> Washes, shaves, and very soon
> Is at the lab; he reads his mail,

Tweaks a tadpole by the tail,
.....
Instructs the jellyfish to spawn
And, by one o'clock, is gone.[127]

In "Zeppelin" too he embodies the same view:

A German speciality, since men
Of other nations must inveigle
Helium or hydrogen;
But Germany had Hegel.

It fell, as do Philosophy's
Symmetric, portly darlings,
Fell from skies where one still sees
Religion's narrow starlings.[128]

He indicates that since both science and philosophy have failed man, religion alone can give him hope.

The novelist depicts poverty to be something desirable for spiritual health. It is shown in *The Poorhouse Fair*, and *The Centaur*. The inmates of *The Poorhouse Fair* are poor, and, in the secular world of that novel, they are the only people in whom the religious feelings are still alive. These inmates also believe that poverty is preferable to prosperity.[129] In *The Centaur* too the people from the poorer section are the only people who are not spiritually dead and are not visited by any confusion. In order to signify it Updike makes George Caldwell feel "most comfortable in the under-reaches of the high school (because) it was warmest there; the steam pipes sang; [and] the talk made sense."[130] These people include the janitors, cooks, milkmen, welders, printers, masons and those who feed the furnaces of the school. George Caldwell himself, the only man to receive God's grace in the Updike world, leads the life of want and poverty.

Updike expresses his belief in the overthrow of materialism in his poem, "Seven Stanzas at Easter". While talking of the rolling back of the stone, he writes:

The stone is rolled back, not papier-mache not a stone
in a story,

But the vast rock of materiality that in the slow
grinding of time will eclipse for each of us
The wide light of day.[131]

and interprets Jesus Christ's resurrection as a symbolic description of the overthrow of materiality.

REFERENCES

1. Rod W. Hoton and Herbert W. Edwards, *Backgrounds of American Literary Thought* (New York : Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967), p. 31.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
3. Materialism is a matter directed philosophy. It holds that only this world is real. It concentrates on immanence and entirely negates transcendence. "According to it, perception is the only source of knowledge. Inference which assumes universal relations, testimony and analogy are all defective. Matter is the only reality..... Consciousness is a function of matter. There are different opinions about the nature of the soul. It is identified with the gross body or the senses or breath or thought. There is no future life. As the soul is an attribute of the body, it comes into being when the body is formed by the combination of the elements even on the power of intoxication arises from the mixture of certain ingredients. When the body is destroyed the soul disappears. The world is born of itself. God is a myth which we accept — thanks to our ignorance and incapacity. Pleasure and pain are the central facts of life. Virtue and vice are conventions" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 12 (Chicago : william Benton Publishers, 1972), p. 116].
4. Materialism and secularism have been derided by a host of Christian writers. For example, Reinhold Niebuhr, while arguing against secularism, states : "A theoretical secularism is inclined to hold the pursuit of happiness as the final meaning of life. This pursuit of happiness easily degenerates into the pursuit of comfort and security. But a culture which gives itself whole heartedly to those ends is bound to discover the limits of this frame of meaning for the life of man" [*Pious and Secular America* (New York : Charles Scribner' Sons, 1958), p. 8].

   Likewise, Albert Terrill Rasmussen maintains : "Materialism or mammonism has, since New Testament days, been considered one of the principal enemies of the Christian faith... Christianity ...has insisted that [the physical instrument

of life] be kept under the control of the higher sovereignty of God. Whenever the material goas of life assume command of our existence and become the final ends, then the Christian must protest" [*Christian Social Ethics : Exerting Christian Influence* (Englewood Cliffs : N.J. Prentice Hall, 1961), pp. 49-50].

5. This attitude is diametrically opposed to that of the Victorians who favoured material advancement. Referring to the attitude of the Victorians Frederick R. Karl and Marvin Magalaner point out : "Victorian England stood for a set of values rooted in a belief in materialism and progress, and its optimism had been able to withstand the inroads of skepticism and eccentricity by making peripheral outspoken discussions of religious doubts...." [*Great Twentieth Century English Novels* (London : Thames and Hudson, 1963), p. 4].
6. The word 'secular', as Harvey Cox points out, denotes "'this world' of change, as opposed to the eternal 'religious world'. This usage already signifies an ominous departure from biblical categories. It implies that the true religious world is timeless, changeless, and thus superior to the 'secular' world which was passing and transient" [*The Secular City : Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York : Macmillan, 1965), p. 19].
7. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1963), p. 18.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
9. This brings him quite close to Jean-Paul Sartre's Roquentin the protagonist of *Nausea* as this lonely intellectual believes that no God wills or directs the activity of the universe and things exist with a thick, fat, sensual, bloated and obscene exuberance. Roquentin believes : "To exist is simply *to be there*; what exists appears, lets itself be *encountered*, but you can never *deduce* it. There are people, I believe, who have understood that. Only they have tried to overcome this contingency by inventing a necessary, casual being" [*Nausea*, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 188].
10. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), pp. 98-102.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
12. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.), p. 15.
13. *The Secular City* (New York : Macmillan, 1965), p. 2.
14. The utopian society depicted by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World* too is a home of prosperity and scientific advancement. In this society babies are created in laboratories, the individual follows a pre-determined course of behaviour in which regular

checks preclude rebellion, Henry Ford has replaced God, and indoctrination and conditioning are complete.

15. Denouncing prosperity Jesus declared : ".... it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (St. Luke, 18 : 25).
16. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), pp. 94-95.
17. St. Matthew, 5 : 3-10.
18. Bernard James, *The Death of Progress* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 8.
19. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 59.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96.
22. *The New Orpheus : Essays toward a Christian Poetic* ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (New York : Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 234.
23. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), pp. 20-21.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
25. Conner tells Lucas : "When Hook, last autumn, ate that unwashed peach, he would have died if Mendelssohn had still been in charge" [*The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p.21].
26. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
27. *Pious and Secular America* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 2.
28. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1963), p. 41.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 98-101.
32. J.H. Darby, "Christianity in the Secular State", *The Catholic Mind*, LII (January 1954), p. 39.
33. *The Poorhouse Fair*, pp. 98-102.
34. See Chapter VII.
35. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 90.
36. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan explains this attitude in the following way : "Nothing that is not evident to the senses or to the extension of the senses provided by scientific instruments has any claim to truth. The world of matter that science explores is real and everything else that is real must be of the same nature as matter. Matter is all that we can see and touch. Whatever is capable of empirical verification is true. To apprehend values, to enjoy beauty, is irrelevant to the question of truth. It is to wander in a world of unrealities, of shadows,

of illusions. An unseen spiritual reality is an unnecessary intruder in the vast impersonal process of space-time" [*Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.), p. 23].

37. "[Faith] is set out as the power of appropriating the blessings that came to man through Jesus as Messiah. We find it in such cases as the paralytic (Mk.2 : 5), the woman with the issue of blood (Mk.5 : 34), the raising of the daughter Jairus (Mk.11 : 52). At Nazareth he was limited by lack of faith among the people (Mk.6 : 5,6). And faith is said to be the power by which people were saved as well as healed (Mk. 7 : 50)" [W.T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament* (Nashville : Broadman Press, 1940), p. 136]. And since Tothero is faithless, he is not destined to have these blessings.
38. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 54.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
41. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.), p. 15.
42. Skeeter comes quite close to Ralph Ellison's unnamed Negro portrayed in *Invisible Man*. This unnamed Negro, like Skeeter, is treated as a criminal by the society in which he lives. Both of them champion the cause of the working class. As Jill allows herself to be "raped" by Skeeter, sex-starved white women lust after the unnamed Negro of Ellison and, sometimes, succeed in getting him.
43. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 241.
44. Genesis, 3 : 4-6.
45. *Rabbit, Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 210.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
47. Genesis, 1 : 1-31.
48. *Rabbit Redux*, p. 261.
49. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. I (London : Nisbet, 1949), p. 182.
50. Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Note on Pluralism", *Religion in America*, ed. John Cogley (Cleveland and New York : Meridian, 1963), p. 45.
51. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 109.
52. "Sin is that state or condition in which one has failed in his obligations to God. It is a failure to live upto what God requires of one.

"This does not mean, however, that Jesus thought of sin as a negative matter. It is not simply the lack of something. It is positive in character. It is a perverse will. It is hostility to God. Moreover, it was not the sins that the world counts the grosser sins that most deeply stirred Jesus to indignation;

it was rather the sins of pride and self-righteousness—sin in its more respectable and subtle forms. It would seem that he regarded these later as the more dangerous and destructive forms of sin" [W.T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament* (Nashville : Broadman Press, 1940), p. 120].

53. St. Matthew, 5 : 28.
54. Randall Stewart, *American Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1958), p. 22.
55. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 158.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
58. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 153.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
62. "Do-gooder Undone", *Time*, 19 January 1959, p. 92.
63. Archimago in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* symbolizes hypocrisy. He makes a show of being very holy though he is a sworn enemy of Una (Truth) and the Red Cross Knight (Holiness). Spenser portrays him as an old man always pretending to pray:

> At length they chaunst to meet upon the way
> An aged Sire, in long blacke weeds yclad,
> His feete all bare, his beard all hoarie gray,
> And by his belt his booke he hanging had:
> Sober he seemed, and very sagely sad,
> And to the ground his eyes were lowly bent,
> Simple in shew, and voide of malice bad;
> And all the way he prayed as he went,
> And often knockt his brest, as one that did repent.
> (*Faerie Queene*, Book I, Canto I, St. 29).

Jesus Christ also rebukes hypocrites in the severest terms: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites ! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them" (St. Luke, 11 : 44).

64. "The Absurd Man as Saint", *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1966), pp. 21-24.
65. St. Luke, 4 : 5-7.
66. *The Poorhouse Fair*,(Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 102.
67. St. Luke, 4 : 8.
68. *John Updike : Yea Sayings* (Carbondale and Edwardsville : Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 32.
69. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 48.
70. Tothero himself accepts : "'I don't believe that my greatest

boy would grow into such a monster" [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 40].

71. "A Note on Pluralism", *Religion in America*, ed. John Cogley (Cleveland and New York : Meridian, 1963), p. 47.
72. Spenser portrays lechery as an embodiment of lust:

> "Inconstant man, that loved all he saw,
> And lusted after all, that he did love,
> Ne would his looser life be tide to law,
> But joyd weake wemens hearts to tempt and prove
> If from their loyall loves he might them move;
> Which lewdnesse fild him with reproachfull paine
> Of that fowle evill, which all men reporve
> That rots the marrow, and consumes the braine,
> Such one was Lecherie, the third of all this traine"
> (*The Faerie Queene*, I, IV, 26).

73. This is shown in the following conversation between Harry and Ruth :

"You dont' believe anything?"
"No. You mean you do?"
"Well, yeah. I think so." Her rasp, her sureness, makes him wince; he wonders if he's lying.... Their clothes, they put on their best clothes : he clings to the thought giddily; it seems a visual proof of the unseen world.
"Well if you do what are you doing here?" she asks.
"Why not? You think you're Satan or somebody?"
This stops her a movement, standing there with her comb, before she laughs. "Well you go right ahead if it makes you happy."
He presses her. "Why don't you believe anything?"
"You're kidding."
"No. Doesn't it ever, at least for a second, seem obvious to you?"
"God you mean? No. It seems obvious just the other way. All the time."
"Well now if God doesn't exist, why does anything?"
"Why? There's no why to it. Things just are"
(*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970). pp. 77-78].

74. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 123.
75. Genesis, 3 : 1-24.
76. *Ibid.* 3 : 23.
77. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 255.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
79. *Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.), p. 21.

80. "Sin is the name given to moral evil when considered from the religious point of view ... Christianity ... sees sin as a deliberate violation of the will of God attributable to man's pride, self-centredness and disobedience. In this respect the Christian view is in direct continuity with the Old Testament and with Judaism. While insisting more strongly than most religions upon the gravity of sin, both in its essence and its consequences, Christianity has emphatically rejected the Manichaean doctrine that either the created world as a whole or the material part of it is inherently evil" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 20 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 556].
81. His ruthless behaviour joins him with Arthur Koestler's communist revolutionaries, namely Rubashov, Ivanov, and Gletkin, depicted in his novel *Darkness at Noon.* Gletkin comes still closer to him because both of them are subhuman and take delight in cruelty for cruelty's sake.
82. *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 163.
83. "Jesus makes the same demand of men that John the Baptist did, and for the same reason. He calls on them to repent because the kingdom of Heaven is at hand (Mt. 3 : 2; 4 : 17). He tells men that they must all repent or perish (Lk. 13 : 3, 5). He says that the people of Nineveh repented at the message of Jonah (Mt. 12 : 41), and says that Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, would have repented in sackcloth and ashes if they had had the opportunity of the cities to whom he preached (Mt. 11 : 21 ff.). The implication is that these cities to whom he preached would be destroyed for lack of repentance. After the resurrection, Jesus commands his disciples to preach repentance and (or unto) remission of sins to all nations. To repent is to change one's mind. The word translated repent *[sic]* means, to think back, reflect, change one's mind. One looks back over his course, considers himself, especially in relation to God, sees that he is wrong and repudiates the wrong" [W.T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament* (Nashville : Broadman Press, 1940), pp. 134-35].
84. See Chapter VII.
85. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 59.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 126.
91. *The Secular City* (New York : Macmillan, 1965), p. 4.
92. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 122.

93. *Ibid.*,
94. *Work in Modern Society* (New York : Morehouse-Gorham, 1950), p. 35.
95. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 185.
96. St. Mark, 15 : 19-20.
97. *The Centuar* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 7.
98. See Chapter IV.
99. The narrator observes : "... Roger was so rich [that] his money was a kind of joke to the others, so rich [that] he apparently barely pretended to work and went in to Boston mostly to have lunch and play squash..." [*Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), pp. 29-30].
100. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 188.
101. Bernard James, *The Death of Progress* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 33.
102. "The Religious Revival in Contemporary Literature", *Western Humanities Review* XI (Winter 1957), p. 66.
103. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 60.
104. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 138.
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
107. S. Radhakrishnan, *Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.) p. 21.
108. St. Matthew, 4 : 17.
109. "Yes indeed, there are such times when men lose faith in God and obedience towards him. And then everything else is lost as well. Israel was lost together with true faith and obedience; the might and brilliance of the kingdom of David and the city of Jerusalem were lost, together with the House of God built by Soloman; the homeland, the land of their fathers was lost; their freedom was lost" [Karl Barth, *Call for God : New Sermons from Basel Prison*, trans. A.T. Mackay (London : SCM Press, 1967), p. 11].
110. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 65.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
112. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
114. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), pp. 265-66.
115. See Chapter II.
116. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 212.
117. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
118. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 47.
119. Goethe remarks : "The one and only real and profound theme of the world and of human history—a theme to which all others are subordinate—remains the conflict between belief

and unbelief. All epochs dominated by belief, in whatever shape, have a radiance and bliss of their own, and bear fruit for their people as well as posterity. All epochs over which unbelief in whatever form maintains its miserable victory, even if they boast and shine for a while with false splendour, are ignored by posterity because nobody likes to drudge his life out over sterile things" [Quoted in S. Radhakrishnan's *Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.), p. 14].

120. St. Matthew, 5 : 31-32.
121. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), p. 38.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 168.
123. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), pp. 434, 435.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
125. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
126. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
127. *Carpentered Hen* (New York : Haper and Row, 1958), p. 17.
128. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
129. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 94.
130. *The Centuar* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 22.
131. *Seventy Poems* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1972), p. 28.

4

No Salvation Through Sex

Updike, in his works, suggests his rejection of several non-Christian spiritual beliefs. The doctrine of salvation-through-sex[1] is one of them. Updike depicts this doctrine in his works through several characters [see *supra*] and evinces that it deserves to be rejected and condemned rather than approved of. This depiction makes it evident that sexuality, for him, is the worship of Satan, a ready recourse of life bereft of spiritual guidance and a submission to the sin of lechery calling for divine chastisement rather than a road to salvation[2] The way he presents the votaries and practitioners of this doctrine manifests that he upholds the Christian attitude towards sexuality and remind the followers of the sexuality-doctrine of the stern words of Jesus Christ declaring sexuality to be a heinous sin : "You heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."[3]

For this purpose Updike gives very explicit descriptions of sex in his works[4] and portrays sexuality with all its follies, illusions, transitoriness, brutality, profound involvement in all human troubles and the naive windiness of the polymorphous perverse[5] because he believes that sex should be described as vividly as a literary work demands.[6] His depiction of sex activities has been widely discussed. On the one hand, it is praised in superlative terms while, on the other, rejected in a

similar vein. For example, though Anatole Broyard maintains that Updike is "best equipped to write definitive description of love and sex,"[7] and Diana Trilling "cannot think of another novel than *Couples* as sexually explicit in its language as Updike's, as direct in its sexual activities, and as fondly devoted to recounting them,"[8] he is condemned for his "attentiveness to the sounds, tastes, and smells of sexual union alongwith the usual visual-tactile description; [his] matter of fact treatment of promiscuity; and [his] use of a sexual-profane langauge...."[9] But the fact that Updike's description of sex activities aims at the indictment of the salvation-through-sex doctrine has evaded the grasp of the critics.

In his novels Updike presents various characters who attempt to attain salvation through sex. They are Harry Angstrom in *Rabbit, Run,* the ten couples in *Couples* and Jill in *Rabbit Redux*. All of the, far from attaining salvation, find themselves in the morass of sin[10] and become the objects of God's wrath in one form or the other.

Harry Angstrom is Updike's first character who uses sex as a spiritual anodyne. When he is in state of spiritual confusion and goes to Tothero for guidance, his old basket-ball coach takes him to Ruth. The incident signifies that sexuality is the way that this old man suggests to Harry. Harry readily accompanies his newly gained mistress to her residence and starts behaving like a sex maniac. This again signifies that Harry accepts the recipe of his erstwhile coach and becomes a practitioner of the sexuality creed. Harry's subsequent behaviour further supports this view. He does not treat Ruth merely as a mistress but as a goal of his spiritual quest and as a substitute for Christianity. That is why he is excited by the idea of making love to her "when the church is full"[11] and makes a proposal of going for outing with her when people are leaving the church.[12] Thus he disregards all the teachings of Christianity—including its moral and spiritual values—and gives himself to adultery, treating it as something holy. While making love to Ruth he "wants to crush her, a little gauge, inside his ribs doubles and redoubles his need for pressure, there is no love in it, love that glances and glides along the skin, he is unconscious of their skins, it is her heart he wants to grind into his own, to comfort her completely."[13] He exudes an erotic

magnetism. His preoccupation with breasts and pudenda is again a sign of his use of sex as security.

Harry's attitude towards the women he encounters further evidences the fact that he treats sexuality as a creed. Janice comes to his consciousness more as a sex-partner than as a wife.[14] Likewise, he looks upon Lucy, the minister's wife, as his potential sex-partner and the goal of his sex adventure.[15] These women are, in fact, satellites that move in their orbits around this sun. Another significant fact is that in the final pages of the novel all of Harry's women are present. Janice, Harry's mother, and Mim are present at the cemetery; baby Becky has been buried; when he runs from the grave yard he wonders whether Lucy would have had him;[16] and at last he is back at Ruth's apartment—a place where he practises his sexuality doctrine and which, he hopes, will give him shelter.

Harry's sex activity is correlated with his religious feelings in all the scenes in which the novelist describes his copulation with Ruth. It again testifies to the view that Harry correlates sex with religion. When Harry looks at the brickbuilding of Ruth, his attention is simultaneously drawn to the limestone church edifice standing nearby.[17] Likewise, from Ruth's apartment Harry frequently looks at the church.18 The way Updike describes the church building at which Harry looks from Ruth's residence again testifies to the fact that sexuality, for him, is a religion which he practises in place of Christianity:

> He goes to the window and bends to see what she means. There is only the church across the way, gray, sombre, confident. Lights behind its rose window are left burning, and this circle of red and purple and gold seems in the city night a hole punched in reality to show the abstract brilliance burning underneath. He feels gratitude to the builders of this ornament, and lowers the shade on it guiltily. He turns quickly, and Ruth's eyes watch him out of shadows that also seem gaps in a surface. The curve of her hip supports a crescent of silver; his sense of her weight seems to make an aroma.[19]

Harry's turning away from the confident church to sex activity

is a symbolic description of his discarding Christianity in favour of his new religion of sexuality.

In the light of this fact the opinion of Anatole Broyard that sex in Updike is "only an anotidote to boredom and emptiness—a negative activity"[20] cannot be accepted. Harry's copulation with Ruth is not merely "an antidote to boredom and emptiness" or merely "a negative activity." In his eyes it is another way to salvation. Though the Christian feelings go on repeatedly intruding into his consciousness and reminding him of his violating the Christian moral law against adultery [see *supra*] yet the spiritual guidance he has received from Tothero spurs him further into sexuality.

Likewise, sexuality is a religion of the couples of Tarbox in *Couples*. Their sex is not simply a "practice—extended by runs without moist orgiastic joy."[21] It is treated by them too as a substitute for the Christian God. The couples treat adultery as communion with Him and make it a form of devotion. They turn each other's bodies into churches which they visit more regularly and more frequently than the Christians visit a real church. The sole pursuit of their life is sex activity—heterosexual in the case of Piet and both homosexual and heterosexual in that of all others. What they indulge in is a black mass of community sex and treat coupling as the only vital activity in their lives. Their constellation is moving in and out of a number of orbits. What Tarbox contains for them is bed-hoppings, or copulation or its strategies, manipulations and substitutes. They have made Tarbox a town where the women accused of adultery are safe. Their attitude is summed up by Freddy: "People are the only things people have left since God packed up. By people I mean sex."[22] The characters are presented here in terms of sexuality rather than as personalities. Angela is called "a lump, a barrier, [and] a boarded door".[23] Piet "flirt[s] with every woman in sight,"[24] and Georgene looks like "a store of clubwomanly indignation."[25] The couples are depicted in such a manner that they present a composite protagonist and seem interchangeable : all the male characters merge into Piet, all women into Foxy, and both men and women into Freddy who, like Tiresias possesses the characteristics of both the sexes and says: "....I want to be everybody's mother. I want to have breasts so everybody can have a suck. Why do you think I drink so

much? To make milk."[26] The homogeneity of the group enables its members to turn to the community sex and make it their religion. Oral sex, for them, is a kind of sacrament and a travesty of Eucharist. The bodies of the lovers replace the Eucharistic body of Christ and erotic theology substitutes the incarnational theology.

The couples equip sexuality, their religion, with all the requirements of an organized religion : priest, rituals and religious ideals. It is again significant that the action takes place in a town the streets of which bear the names Hope, Charity and Divinity[27]—the names closely associated with the Christian religion. These couples are not making a search for God. On the other hand, they treat sex as a convenient god of their making. It is Freddy Thorne who performs the functions of priest. He is a man whom the votaries of sexuality tolerate without loving and hear without heeding. They seek him out when they can use him and avoid him if he gives unsolicited advice. A dentist by profession and a psychiatrist by avocation Freedy too is fully conscious of his role as a priest. He tells Angela in the earlier part of the novel that the couples are a "magic circle of heads to keep the night out" and that they have "made a church of each other."[28] It is again in order to strengthen the priestly role of Freedy Thorne that Updike reveals him in his dentist's garb in "sacerdotal white"[29] and sets the view from his office window "upward over backyards toward the tip of the Congregational church."[30]

Like a priest Freddy gives his "laity" religious counsel and sometimes makes personal sacrifices to help others. When he learns that Janet Appleby is finding the Applesmith spouse-trading affair distasteful, he offers to have an affair with her—as much or little an affair as she wants—to help her out of the mess. The explanation he gives for his offer is: "I like to help people."[31] His arranging and carrying out the abortion for Foxy is another example of his helping his laity. He demands one night with Angela—a sacrifice from Piet—as payment.[32] It is a kind of sacrifice that requires total acquiescence of his parishioner yet one he cannot use and does not want personally. It is a sacrifice to the religion of sexuality and is designed to humble and totally tax the giver, not to appease a god. He gets a night with Piet's wife, accepts it and then cannot gain

any pleasure from it. This is not a personal reward by the "priest" but a ritual sacrifice—the sacrifice of a beloved and unspoiled lamb, a precious treasure and a complete submission in payment for absolution.

His parishioners too come to him for advice. Angela seeks him out at parties to discuss children and "psychology". Janet needs his counsel on marriage affairs. Foxy comes to him for abortion. Piet requires his help at a moment of crisis and makes sacrificial payment. These parishioners despise their priest but follow his lead faithfully and accept his sense of the spiritual. When he points the sacred bone at Hanema, there is no question as to who will leave the tribe.

As a priest has to preach his doctrine, so does Freddy. The main topics which he preaches on to his flock are love, man's purpose on earth, and death. In his repeatedly revised and oft delivered sermons he gives the message that love would solve all human problems but people do not wish to give themselves fully to the cause of love and do not love as much as they should. For example, once he preaches to his laity: "People hate love. It threatens them. It's like tooth decay, it smells and it hurts. I'm the only man alive it doesn't threaten, I wade right in with pick and mirror. I love you, all of you, men, women, neurotic children, crippled dogs, mangy cats, cockroaches."[33] In his vocabulary "love" and "sex" mean one and the same thing.

On the question of the purpose of life on earth his answer is, again, nothing else but sex. He preaches: "I've seen the light. You know why we're all put here on earth.....It just came to me. A vision. We're all put here to humanize each other."[34] And "humanizing", in his vocabulary, is a term associated with sex for, while, stating the life's purpose in another way, he remarks : "You are born to get laid and die, and the sooner the better."[35] His parishioners obey him quite faithfully, so far as the "getting laid" part of his sermon is concerned. Freddy links love, tragedy, death and God together and directs each channel to sex which is the main stream of his thought.

The people comprising Freddy's laity hold their meetings once a week usually on Saturdays or Sundays. Most of the meetings begin with the setting of the sun on Saturday and go into the early hours of the next day. This practice resembles

the Christian church meeting on the Sabbath day. Their rituals are the games of fellowship of kindred souls of a variety of cultures, gestures of love, "sermons", eating and drinking, and confession. The games of "impressions" and "wonderful" are the rituals that enable them to discover the thoughts and secrets of one another. They use these games to examine and cross examine on another. When somebody is found guilty, he or she is forgiven and sanctified in the eyes of all. Sexuality, in their case too, is not a simple antidote to boredom and emptiness. It is a sacrament to them, a form of transcendental meditation, adoration and purification.

The novelist concentrates his attention on the sexual relations—marital and extra marital—of these couples. He depicts them in varying combinations, gives all the details and very explicitly describes their sexual behaviour. It is by being specific that he shows its variety. These characters "say things in public that...[one] would blush to say in private."[36] It is entirely irrelevant here to talk of chastity or fidelity. The member of this clique change their bed-sharers "as casually as dancers changing partners in a Paul Jones."[37] The author shows the interchangeability of the adulterers by making it difficult for the reader to remember who sleeps with whom. Harold Smith beds down with Janet Appleby, and Marcia Smith with Frank Appleby. The ecstatical closeness between them leads their friends to call them Applesmiths. Eddie Constantine goes to be with Irene Saltz and Ben Saltz with Carol Constantine. They are givne the name of Saltines. Piet can be called insatiable.[38] At the beginning he is involved with Georgene, Freddy Throne's wife. But soon he turns to Foxy. He also sleeps with Bea and Carol. They confine themselves to sexuality so much that it envelopes their whole life. They concentrate on it to the extent that they change Tarbox into, in Angela's words, "a sexpot".[39] They remain unaffected by any other activity and pay no attention to the collision of airplains in Turkey, coups of Iraq and Togo, earthquakes in Libya, a stampede in the Canary Islands and Chapel collapse in Ecuador.[40] Even the assassination of President Kennedy fails to make them cancel their meeting. They undermine the institution of marriage as well as the belief that marriage is a sacrament.

But it does not mean that *Couples* is merely "a fiendish compendium of exurban manners—the dinner party scenes, the

protocol of adultery, the care and neglect of children."[41] Such an interpretation will be very superficial. In fact, the ways of the couples are to be taken as the ways which, they think, are taking them towards spiritual attainment.

In *Rabbit Redux* it is Jill who practises the salvation-through-sex doctrine. She gives her body to Harry and allows Skeeter to "rape" her. Her sexuality is different from that of Mim or Janice. Mim uses sexuality as a profession while for Janice it is a way to get rid of the boredom that has entered her family life. But the two men to whom Jill gives her body profess their association with the affairs of spiritualism and consider themselves to be prophets in one way or the other: Harry is a mystic who once talked of founding a new religion;[42] Skeeter, likewise, calls himself another Christ and claims to be God's son.[43] Moreover, Jill is a quester who reads the books on theology and has formulated a theology of her own. It is her spiritual quest that has led her to run away from her home. This step of running from home stands for her rejecting the established values of Christianity and going in quest of a new religion. Moreover, she is often found associating her sexuality with spiritualism by describing her ways in terms of Christianity. For example, once she calls her naked body a "Christmas tree".[44]

But Updike's depiction makes it evident that in his eyes the sexuality of these questers does not at all lead them to God or salvation and their love is eros rather than *agape*.[45] The novelist treats all these practitioners of the sexuality "sect" as sinners who have to pay the price for their sinful ways, rather than as saints who make spiritual attainments. It is for this purpose that they are chastised in one form or the other.

Eros-love leads man away from God, makes his self his only goal[46] and leads him to transpose thanksgiving responsibility, obedience and calling upon God into a "a desire and longing and striving and transcending in which he spreads himself with some degree of coarse or refined appetite and more or less skill and consistency in the sense of spiritual world, using it and making it serviceable to himself...."[47] All this is true of Harry's sexual behaviour, particularly with Ruth. Harry goes to Ruth in order to get rid of his spiritual confusion, but this *Eros*-love leads him further away from God because

> In it [man] prefers a being from and by and in and for himself to togetherness with God as his eternal counterpart, and makes God the origin of this self-inflated and self-enclosed being. In it he thus fabricates his God out of compulsion and impulsion to this being, and therefore his own caprice. In the name of this reflection he chooses himself as the basis from which he comes, and therefore accepts the whole burden and responsibility for his help and preservation, for the securing and sheltering of his being.[48]

Eros-love leads Harry to think of himself as Christ and obey no spiritual laws but the ones made by himself.

Harry desires all the three women he encounters—Janice, Ruth and Lucy Eccles—as objects rather than as human beings. Janice tells him in explicit terms: "You're just using me."[49] The command of the Christian God "does not put anyone, man or woman, in a humiliating, dishonourable or unworhty position."[50] Harry's *eros*-love, therefore, goes contrary to God's command and is to be regarded as a sin, rather than as a way to salvation.

Freddy Thorne in *Couples* embodies the narcissistic absurdity that Eros-love can become. This dentist lusts for Angela and manages to sleep with her. But when finally he gets a chance he is impotent and cannot perform. He is fascinated by the concept of passion but cannot share in an authentic love relationship.

Harry's sexuality is identified, by Updike, with sin. This is evident from the fact that at the end of the novel Harry is found in his private Inferno where there is the domain of nausea.[51] The sinner is condemned to incessant running and receiving the buffets of the carnal damned. *Eros*-love revenges upon the culprit. Harry remains guilt-ridden and terror-stricken. For example, when he visits his mother, he feels he is a sinner and thinks that his mother is disgusted with him because "he slept with Ruth, and committed adultery."[52] Even the breath of steam frightens him "like a whisper in a tomb."[53] Likewise, when he goes to his residence to get his clothes he is so ashamed of his adulterous behaviour that "he begins to tremble."[54] Thus appetite becomes nausea and security gives way to panic.

Freddy's Godless sex fails to lead any of its votaries towards transcendence. What happens in their case comes quite close to the consequences of the death of God doctrine which leads one to live in the immediate moment : "The death of God abolishes transcendence, thereby making possible a new and absolute immanence, an immanence freed of every sign of transcendence. Once a new humanity is fully liberated from even the memory of transcendence, it will lose all sense of bondage to the past, and with the loss of that bondage it will be freed from all that No-saying which turns us away from the immediacy of an actual and present 'Now'."[55] Adultery serves the couples as a shield against their awareness of death only for a short while and soon they are visited by God's wrath.

Chastisement visits Harry in the form of his children's death. June, his newly born daughter is drowned in the bath-tub and the God of his theology does not come to open the cork; his baby in Ruth's womb is aborted. At the same time he begins to feel that all this has been caused by his sinful behaviour.[56]

Similar is the case with Piet in *Couples*. His daughter is afraid of death and he cannot comfort her, and then his child in Foxy is aborted. *Couples* is a death-ridden novel and the stress upon death in this novel is as strong as concentration upon sex. The close relationship between sex and death culminates in Freddy who is aroused by the thoughts of dying.[57]

The intensity of the revenge that visits Harry is also shown in *Rabbit Redux* where Janice violates the obligations of a Christian marriage.[58] She goes to live with Charlie Stavros, her lover and her fellow worker in her father's office. When Harry asks her where they make love, "....worlds whirl pas and clour her eyes—car seats, rugs, tree undersides seen through windshields, the beigy-gray carpetting in the narrow space between the three green steel desks and the safe and the Toyota cut-out, motel rooms with their card board panelling and scratchy bedspreads, his dour bechelor's apartment stuffed with heavy furniture and tinted relatives in silver frames."[59] She does everything for her lover because to her "it feels holy".[60] Once Rabbit indulged in adultery, now it is her turn. Rabbit accepts her after her return from Starvos because he has no right to punish her as she has done nothing more than what he did.

The Godless religion of the couples is treated as a sin as it is a deviation from the Christian sin-and-atonement doctrine and violates its moral code [see *supra*], *Couples* is not "a morally ambiguous book, though Diana Trilling believes it to be so.[60] The novelist's vision, which is evidenced by the fact that he has made the activities of the couples appear vain, futile and unattractive, is one of disgust with the entire scene. Sexuality brings down on the couples the tribulations of guilt, entrapment and helplessness. They fall from grace.[62] Piet is haunted by death and feels afraid of the judgment of the Calvinistic God.[63] He lies awake at night remembering his adulteries and fearing death.[64] Moreover, horrible dreams visit him regularly. For example, one day he dreams himself to be in a jet which "rocked and jerked in the humpy air currents...grabbed for something, missed, slipped, and tilted...[and] streamed straight down."[65] He is sure of his damnation and tells Foxy: "I'll be damned eternally."[65] The jet of his dreams is the symbol of the salvation-through-sex doctrine which Piet has taken recourse to, and its streaming "straight down" stands for the damnation to which Piet is being led.

Towards the close of *Couples* Updike provides a symbolic blast. This suggests that according to Updike Tarbox, the town in which the sexuality-creed is practised, resembles Sodom and Gommorah, the two Biblical towns which were visited by God's brimstone and fire for their inhabitants had given themselves to fornication.[67] When the blast is there, the whole crowd is silent out of shame. The narrator calls the incident the proclamation of the supernatural.[68] The whole of the scene is a judgment against the sexuality doctrine and signifies its outright rejection.

The catastrophe that Piet faces affects the other Tarbox couples too. They interpret it as God's judgment on their sexuality doctrine. For example, Roger gets "frightened" and becomes "very serious."[69] They stop going to parties anymore and seal themselves off from Piet's company and feel they are still "haunted and chastened, as if his fall had been scrificial."[70] They retreat from their obsessive adulteries into defeat and settle down to conformity. Sex is tamed, brought low and taught in schools.[71] Sin is dead and fair weather *bonhomie* of the contemporary church replaces it. The remaining Tarbox couples

survive as a tamer community. The loss of spiritualism disillusions them and leads them to accept the Christian attitude towards sex [see *supra*].

According to Robert Detweiler the couples "suffer because they are confused by the complexity of marriage in a secular world."[72] However, Updike gives no clue to suggest that the couples are confused on account of the complexity of the marriage affairs or practices. The trouble with these couples is that they make sex their religion and they suffer because their practice is a violation of the ecclesiastical laws laid down by the Bible[73] and hence a sin.

Rachael C. Burchard is of the opinion that Updike does not give his judgment on the sexual behaviour. To quote her: "As the characters in *Couples* are gentle and tolerant of each other, so their creator is gentle and tolerant of them. Any criticism of their way of life must be made by the reader. The author tells about them as they are, at one movement loving or youthfully beautiful, at another foolish, dissipated, depraved. He describes them, he does not pass judgment on them."[74] But Updike's introducing the proclamation of the supernatural, Piet's sacrificial fall and the punishment that visits the couples [see *supra*] are an evidence to the effect that Updike rejects the doctrine and the behaviour of the Tarbox couples, and does not let his views remain ambiguous.

Jill, too, fails to attain salvation through sex. Her ways lead her to violate the Christian morality [see *supra*] and to submit to the sin of lechery. Since the wages of sin is death,[75] she is burnt to death in Harry's house which was her 'temple' of the religion of sexuality. As the congregational church is burnt in *Couples*, the house of Harry—the place where the sexuality doctrine is practised, comes to ashes in *Rabbit Redux*.

The devices of obsesssiveness, repetitiveness, overtness, infantilism and tediousness which are employed in the description of the sex activities of the couples have led Diana Trilling to believe that *Couples* is a book of pornography rather than a fictional work which may deal extensively or primarily with sex.[76] But the sexual saturation in the novels of Updike is not, what Robert Detweiler termed as, "an attempt at fictional sensationalism through an appeal to salacious."[77] It is an attempt to declare untenable the non-Christian views looking upon sex as a road to God. Thus it is

instructive in the true sense of the term and has direct correlation with the novelist's spiritual vision. Updike's depiction of sex is in absolute agreement with the Christian doctrine which he upholds in his works.[78] The view that "Updike's religious thesis seemed insufficiently integrated with the novel (*Couples*) as a whole [parenthesis ours]"[79] cannot be accepted in the light of the fact that all his characters who act against the Christian religious laws are punished and are also made conscious of the reason of punishment. If Piet and the other members of Freddy's flock had been allowed to go on leading a happy time and no catastrophe had befallen them, only then the above-mentioned proposition of Sissman could have been accepted. Since all the votaries of sexuality are treated as sinners, the depiction cannot be considered to be in disagreement with the author's spiritual vision.

Updike stresses this view further by making George Caldwell, his ideal character,[80] a hater of sexuality. George Caldwell takes upon himself the task of punishing the lecherous students. When he finds Deifendorf behaving in a lecherous way he takes the shining arrow-shaft from his desk and whips Deifendorf's "bare back".[81] George's love for his wife is *agape*, rather than *eros*. *Agape*-love, which "consists in the orientation of human nature on God in a movement which does not merely express it but means that it is transcended, since in it man gives himself up to be genuinely freed by and for God, and therefore to be from self-concern and free for the service of God"[82] frees George from self-concern for the service of God and leads him to Him.

Thus Updike's treatment of sex is different from that of Lawrence. Sex in the novels of Lawrence is "mystical, even religious,"[82] but Updike's is not. His treatment, as stated earlier, is based on the Christian doctrine and is intended to reject the non-Christian doctrine of salvation-through-sex. "The sex-taboo in Christianity was apparently....an effort of the human soul to wrest itself free from the entanglement of physical lust—which lust, though normal and appropriate and in a way gracious among the animals, had through the domination of self-consciousness became diseased and morbid or monstrous in Man."[83] Likewise, lust in Updike's works is a road to sin.

Rachael C. Burchard believes that in the depiction of sexuality in these novels Updike does not depict sin in the

traditional sense of the disobedience of the ecclesiastical law. She states : "Sin in a traditional sense, the disobedience of the ecclesiastical law, is not the topic of the novelist. He shows people behaving : responding, loveing reacting, hating. Perhaps their errors—or sins—can be summed up in one sin : separating themselves from God."[85] But the sin of 'separating oneself from God' is illustrated in the case of Conner in *The Poorhouse Fair*,[86] it is nothing less than the disobedience of the ecclesiastical law[87] that is depicted in Piet and the other sex maniacs. Burchard's opinion cannot be accepted mainly in connection with Piet who continually goes on praying to God. The only sin for which he has been punished is the sin of adultery which is the disobedience of eccelesiastical law [see *supra*].

REFERENCES

1. The doctrine of salvation-through-sex was propounded by the oriental philosophies known as the *Vam Marg*. Karl H. Potter discusses them as 'Left Hand Philosophies' in his book, *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies* (Englewood Cliffs : Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963, pp. 192-93). This doctrine has been accepted by the Beats. It is evidenced by the following passage from Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* :

   > "The Bodhisattva women of Tibet and part of ancient India" said Japhy, "were taken and used as holy concubines in temples and sometimes in ritual caves and would get to lay up a stock of merit and they meditated too. All of them, men and women, they'd meditate, fast, have balls like this, go back to eating, drinking, talking, hike around, live in Viharas in the rainy season and outdoors in the dry, there was no question of what to do about sex which is what I always like about Oriental religion."

   [Quoted by Walter Allen in *The Modern Novel in Britain and the United States* (New York : E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc., 1968), p. 312].

2. "Salvation is the *justification* of the transgressor, his acquittal before the universal court despite his guilt. Its condition is repentance interpreted as acknowledgement of guilt and sorrow for sin and perhaps also the substitutionary punishment of another, the Christ. The life of the redeemed is conceived often as life under a new or higher law or, more adequately,

as life lived in obedience to inner law, inscribed upon the heart. The standard terms of theology all reflect the presence of the mind of legal imagery, justification by faith, substitutionary atonement, the righteousness of God etc." [M. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self : An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York, Evanston, and London : Harper and Row, 1963), p. 130].

3. St. Matthew, 5 : 27-28.
4. The Victorian English novelists did not give explicit description of sex activities. They treated "the frank recognition and expression of sex" as a forbidden fruit. [Walter Allen, *The English Novel : A Short Critical History* (London : Phoenix House, 1955), p. 136]. It can be seen in the novels of Dickens and Thackeray who never write about the sexual behaviour of their lovers. The reader learns nothing about the sexual life of Emily and Steerforth (*David Copperfield*) or that of Becky and Lord Steyne (*Vanity Fair*).
5. Nabokov's *Lolita* Is, likewise, a novel in which sexual perversion is depicted through Humbert who marries a widow because he is fascinated by her small daughter. He makes love to both the mother and the daughter. Humbert, describing Lolita, says: "Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul" [*Lolita* (London : Transworld, Corgi, 1971), p. 11].
6. While expressing this view in an interview Updike remarked: "About sex in general, by all means let's have it in fiction as detailed as needs be, but real, real in its social and psychological connections" [Charles T. Samueles, "The Art of Fiction XLIII: John Updike", *Paris Review*, XII (Winter 1968), pp. 102-03].
7. "Updike's Two-Somes", *The New Republic*, CLVIII (4 May 1968), p. 28.
8. "Updike's Yankee Traders", *Atlantic*, CCXXI (April 1968), p. 130.
9. Robert Detweiler, *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 159.
10. Nathaniel Hawthorne too depicts adultery as a sin in *The Scarlet Letter*. Explaining it Abraham H. Lass points out : "The 'moral' of *The Scarlet Letter* is that adultery is sinful and those who sin must suffer. But penance is not enough; it must be fused with penitence. Dimmmesdale's price, his egotism, his fear of social ostracism render his suffering fruitless because he conceals his sin, shrinks from joining Hester in her disgrace" [*Fifty American Novels*, ed. Abraham H. Lass (New York : Washington Square Press, 1970), p. 25].

11. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 78.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
14. Harry thinks : "She used to make it easier before they got married. She could be sudden then. Just a girl. Nerves like new thread. Skin smelled like fresh cotton. Her girl friend at work had an apartment in Brewer they used" [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 15].
15. Luca, a boy of fifteen, in Alberto Moravia's novel *Two Adolescents* is a sex-maniac like Harry. He looks upon the governess and the nurse as his potential sex partners, though the governess is thirty five years old and the nurse is a wrinkled old woman.
16. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawecett, 1970), p. 248.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 74, 254.
19. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 69.
20. "Updikes Two-Somes", *The New Republic* CLVIII (4 May 1968), p. 30.
21. Josh Greenfeld, "A Romping Set in a New England Town", *Commonweal*, LXXXVIII (26 April 1968), p. 186.
22. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 155.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
26. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 368.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
28. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 12.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
32. He tells Piet : "This is my show and I've had enough of your lip. I want one night. That's very modest. One night with Angela. Work it out, fella. Tell her what you have to. Tell her everything. Confession in good for the soul" [*Couples* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1968), p. 375].
33. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 155.
34. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 158.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
36. C.W. Griffin, "Updike's Tarbox", *Reporter*, XXXVIII (30 May 1968), p. 43.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Marcel in Marcel Proust's Novel *Swann's Way* has several mistresses like Piet. They are Gliberte, Albertine and Andree.

39. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 222.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
41. Wilfrid Sheed, "Play in Tarbox", *The New York Times Book Review*, LXXIII (7 April 1968), p. 33.
42. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 90.
43. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 210.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 256.
45. While describing these two varieties of love Karl Barth points out :
"... agape-love takes place in correspondence and eros-love in contradition to this nature; the one as its 'analogue' and the other as its 'catalogue'; the one as man does that which is right and in relation to it, and the other as he does that which is not right in relation to it. *Agape*-love takes place in affinity, *eros*-love in opposition, to human nature. As we see, they both take place in relationship to it (and in this they can be compared). But in the one case the relationship is positive, in the other negative (so that they cannot be compared). In this antithetical use and character, in which the one unchanging human takes on form but which differ as Yes and No, being related only in respect of their object, *eros* and *agape* go their divergent ways" [*Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 185].
46. Tolstoy depicts two kinds of love in *Anna Karenina* : the Christian love and the sinful love. The two ways of love are represented by the marriage of Kitty and Levin on one hand and the adultery of Anna and Vronsky on the other. At the outset it is by no means obvious that Anna will end tragically and Kitty happily. Anna has several advantages over Kitty : she is cleverer and more charming than Kitty. Kitty is simply a nice girl and Levin lacks the poise, the glitter and the charm of his rival. The moral lesson that this novel gives is that the relation between the sexes is destructive when it is possessive and self-centred, but ennobling when it is inspired by unselfish love.
47. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans., G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 187.
48. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans, G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), pp. 186-87.
49. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 206.
50. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 205.

51. Jean-Paul Sartre depicts a victim of this disease in his novel *Nausea*. Antoine Roquentin, the protagonist of this novel, is disturbed by increasingly painful attacks of nausea. He writes in his diary : "The thing is that I very rarely think; consequently a host of little metamorphoses accumulate in me without my noticing it, and then, one fine day, a positive revolution takes place. That is what has given my life this halting, incoherent aspect" [*Nausea*, trans. Robert Baldick (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 14].
52. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 189.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
55. Thomas J.J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*(Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 154.
56. He tells Janice : "It wasn't your fault..... It was mine." [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 231].
57. This joining of sexuality with death brings Updike close to Aldous Huxley who in his *Eyeless in Gaza* presents a scene in which a dog falls from an airplane and splashes two nude lovers on a roof with blood and pieces of flesh.
58. "[In Christianity] a violation of the bond of marriage is also interpreted as a desecration of the relation between man and God, not merely as a breach of human morality" {*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 5 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 700.]
59. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), pp. 65-66.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 56.
61. "Updike's Yankee Traders", *Atlantic*, CCXXI (April 1968), p. 129.
62. "Grace, in Christian theology, is the gift of divine favour that grants salvation. The English term is the usual translation for the Greek *Charis*, which occurs in the New Testament about 150 times... Although the word must sometimes be translated in other ways, the fundamental meaning in the New Testament and in subsequent theological usage is that contained in Epistle to Titus...: 'The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men." [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 10 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 650.
63. "The weight of this stagnant night *[sic]*. Fear scurried inside him, seeking a place to stop... The death of another always a secret relief *[sic]*. Tides of life swing up to God for slaughter... Revolving terror scooped the shell of him *[sic]* thin. A translucent husk emptied of seed, Piet waited to be shattered" [*Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), pp. 272-73].

64. "... he believed that there was, behind the screen of couples and houses and days, a Calvinistic God who lifts to our prayers or consultation with our wills" [*Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 434].
65. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
67. Genesis, 19 : 24.
68. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 460.
69. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 441.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 477.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 476.
72. "Updike's *Couples* : Eros Demythologized", *Twentieth Century Literature*, XVII (October 1971), p. 236.
73. Exodus, 10 : 2-17.
74. *John Updike : Yea Sayings*(Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 117.
75. Romans 6 : 23.
76. "Updike's Yankee Traders", *Atlantic* CCXXI (1 April 1968), p. 130.
77. *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 59.
78. See Chapter VII.
79. L.E. Sissman, John Updike : Midpoint and After", *The Atlantic*, CCXXVI (August 1970), p. 130.
80. See Chapter VII.
81. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 44.
82. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 186.
83. Antole Broyard "Updike's Two-somes", *The New Republic*, CLVIII, 18 (4 May 1968), p. 30.
84. Edward Carpenter, *Pagan and Christian Creeds : Their Origin and Meaning* (New York : Blue Ribbon Books, 1920), p. 192.
85. *John Updike : Yea Sayings* (Carbondale and Edwardsville : Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p. 119.
86. See Chapter III.
87. Sigrid Undset, the famous novelist of Denmark, also depicts in her novel *Kristin Lavransdatter* how the disobedience of the ecclesiastical law brings chastisement. The moral framework of this novel is unequivocally Christian. The novelist depicts that men are unhappy because they are sinners. Kristin and Erlend commit sin and lose chastity. Consequently, punishment follows. Both Kristin and Erlend come to grief and lead unhappy lives.

5

Derision of the Church

Likewise, by depicting the weakness of the Church in his works, Updike indicates his distrust in its universal efficacy to redeem the laity. His Church, in most of the cases, is not, what is expected to be, "a fellowship of the Holy Spirit.[1] It is not always "the sphere in which the redemptive work of Christ is continued and the life-giving and sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit is carried out."[2] Updike refers to the inadequacy of most adherents of the Church to embody the fellowship or community of the faithful. Several of his churchmen are spiritually shallow and fail to be "the bearer[s] of the Gospel and the custodian[s] of the special revelation of God,"[3] and hence they are incapable of leading their parishioners away from sin and to faith in the Word of God. By finding faults with the clergymen Updike suggests his favour for the view that the Church is not infallible and "in all its forms and enterprises, participates fully and very concretely in the perversity and futility of all human efforts, and that it is, therefore, useless from the very outset for it to offer or commend either itself or the Christians united within it as a salutary example."[4]

The main weaknesses of the Churchmen,[5] as depicted in Updike's works, are their loss of faith in the Scriptures, the wide gulf between what they preach and what they practise, their indifference to their flock, their inability to answer the

religious questions, their mutual rivalries, their money-mindedness, and their weakness for women. These weaknesses make them figures of fun and disappointment.[6] The result is that the Church in many of Updike's works is incapable of performing "the task imposed upon it in its humanity"[7] and it cannot confess with a final certainty, that, as it speaks about God in human words, it proclaims God's own Word."[8] As a consequence, the Church is unable to touch the lives of the people in a positive manner and to be a spiritual torch-bearer.

The churchmen make their first appearance in Updike's novels in *Rabbit, Run* and manifest their incompetence in helping Harry Angstrom to redeem himself. Rev. Fritz Kruppenbach, the Lutheran[9] pastor of the Angstrom family, is an exemplar of apathy. He does not believe in a priest's offering spiritual consolation to his parishioners. Harry Angstrom belongs to his parish but this minister does not worry about his spiritual confusion at all. In his manner too he is a bully and, instead of appreciating Eccles's efforts to give spiritual guidance to his flock, calls him an "unpaid doctor".[10]

John Updike, by depicting the pastor in this manner, emphasizes that in the Church "there is no possible place for idleness, indifference, or lukewarmness."[11] He draws the reader's attention to the growing gap between the clergy and the laity and maintains that a pastor is under an obligation to live closely with his people and understand their spiritual problems so that he may be able to lead them to redemption. If every pastor is apathetic like Kruppenbach, every Harry Angstrom is doomed to remain morassed in sin.

Rev. Jack Eccles, the Episcopalian[12] pastor of the Springer family, is an embodiment of liberal Christianity—a form of Christianity which, in the words of Hans Hofmann, "has lost its own proper authority, attaches itself much too pliantly to the view of man and the world prevalent in society."[13] And through him Updike rejects this form of Christianity. Eccles is "a perfect antithesis of Kruppenbach."[14] He is almost of the same age as Harry Angstrom and possesses several, almost identical, weaknesses [see *infra*]. He has come of a famed ecclesiastical family in New England, and has become a minister in the footsteps of his forefathers.

His name is symbolic—he is named after *ecclesia* (church) and "indicates an ecclesiastic."[15] He is free from Kruppenbach's weakness and does not uphold Kruppenbach's view that a priest should remain aloof and let Harrys and Janices lead sinful lives [see *supra*]. He identifies himself with the parishioners and tries to help them out of spiritual confusion. According to him nobody is aloof. He confesses to Mrs. Springer: "I believe that we are responsible beings, responsible for ourselves and for each other."[16] He tries his best to help Harry when the latter is under the spell of spiritual confusion. Moreover, he tries to make the Christian Gospel and doctrine relevant to the problems of his laity.[17]

But he is beset by a bundle of weaknesses and limitations. Inspite of being a minister he cannot have any conviction about Christianity and God.[18] In his own opinion he has been practising forgery all his life and is a criminal deserving imprisonment: "With his white collar he forges God's name on every word he speaks. He steals belief from the children he is supposed to be teaching. He murders faith in the minds of any who really listens to his babble. He commits fraud with every schooled cadence of the service, mouthing Our Father when his heart knows the real father he is trying to please, has been trying to please him all his life."[19] In his heart of hearts he knows he has no faith in the revealed theology or the Scripture. When Mrs. Springer talks of men being all hearts and women being all bodies and nobody being brains, he feels he has forgotten all theology, and decides to go to Kruppenbach for advice.[20] Eccles has been trapped into the ministry by parental expectations. He has no spiritual vision to communicate. Though he has compassion he is unable to pass it on as a formula to Harry who seeks the security of a simple and infallible dogma. At the most he tries to reconcile Harry unto God rather than lead him to Him.

He behaves more like an unpaid social worker than like a priest. He forms a softball team for children and takes them to games.[21] In order to understand Harry and his problems he plays golf with him and tries to make him "face the responsibility of his marriage."[22] He himself is not sure of his duties or belief. Although he believes in a cigar smoking God, he teaches the ways of the Christian God for the only reason

that he is a minister. When he is behind the altar, he looks "absent-minded and grouchy, remote and insubstantial and stiff."[23] In his robes he appears to be "the sinister priest of a drab mystery."[24] He has no taste for the dark aspect of Christianity and is afraid of women, though he is fine with the old ones and teenagers.[25]

Like Harry, a patient whom he is trying to cure of spiritual confusion, he himself is in the clutches of the disease of the lack of faith. In fact, he mirrors Harry in this regard. There is a constant conflict in his heart between what he believes and what Christianity expects him to believe. And this is the reason behind his failure in bringing Harry back to the fold of Christianity. The teachings of a minister, as Karl Barth maintains, "cannot have real power unless they arise, not from unbelief, but from faith."[26] Since Eccles is an unbelieving Christian cleargyman his teaching cannot be expected to be effective. Since he goes on trumpeting his own religiousness without displaying in his personal and corporate action and attitudes that he really means what he says, he has no moral influence on his laity[27] and his views are accepted neither by the Angstroms, nor by the Springers.

The narrator also refers to Eccles' minor faults which he commits in his everyday life and which are responsible for his not being as effective as he should be. When he meets Harry for the first time, he parks his car on the wrong side of the street and it seems funny to Harry that the ministers "ignore small laws."[28] He is indiscreet and "tells confidence".[29] He cannot make his children obey him and his wife calls him "childish".[30] When he goes to the golf course he indulges in "brainless gaity".[31] To Harry he gives the impression that he does not "know his job".[32] He occupies a subordinate position to a domineering wife and this again brings him low in Harry's eyes. Moreover, he does not possess the authority needed in an authority figure.

Thus Harry resembles a man who performs his duties only perfunctorily tied to a symbol. Since he has a family background of religious division,[33] he is further led into a swamp of traditionlessness and faces nothing else but dismay and frustration. His failure symbolizes the failure of skeptical churchmen. In Fred L. Standley's opinion Eccles is a "sympathetically drawn character."[34] But if he had been a sympathetically drawn character, he would not have been

satirized and the novelist would not have exposed him to such a great extent as to make him an infidel.

Reverend March of *The Centaur* is rejected unequivocally. He is an embodiment of doubt rather than faith. Theology, instead of giving him faith, has given shape and also depth to his doubts. He does not like his profession at all. The narrator mockingly states: "In retrospect the religiosity that had prompted his vocation seemed, in so far as it was not sheerly his mother's will, a sickly phosphorescence exuded by sexual uncertainty. His tiny voice mocked his prevaricating sermons with squeakings. He feared his deacons and despised his message. In 1941 war rescued him. He enlisted, not as a chaplain but as a fighting man."[35] The thing that terrifies him most is the answering of the theological questions.[36] It signifies that he is not properly equipped with the knowledge of the Christian doctrine, and that circumstances have imposed on him the task of a minister against his will.

Moreover, though he is a Christian minister, he, like Eccles, has no faith in the Christian doctrine. He also clings to several non-Christian beliefs. For example, he considers life to be a hell.[37] If he has any faith[38] at all, it is dead like metal, though intact and infrangible.[39] He even mocks it saying that it depends on his will to pick faith up but it cannot reach him for it is inanimate. He condemns the church congregation too. The church, for him, is "an empty place where people keep calling and nodding politely and saying, 'Thank you' as if the host were there."[40]

This priest is more interested in Vera and in flirting with her than in the questions on theology. When he is attending the boys' game at the auditorium, he comes to Vera—"this golden dove, this sandy sparrow."[41] When he is flirting with her, George Caldwell comes to him with his theological questions. This is so unwelcome to March that he turns away from George and looks around him for some rescue. But unfortunately there is none and under a sort of compulsion he starts answering these questions. He does not find any essential difference between the viewpoint of the Reformeds and that of the Lutherans. In order to conceal his ignorance he says that sooner or later "all the children of Reformation will be reunited."[42] When George comes to the difference between the

Lutherans and the Calvinists on the question of Christ, March not only feels embarrassed but also grows angry. According to him both Orthodox Calvinists and Lutherans are Christocentric.[43] Then George comes to the theory of predsestination and March shifts to that of God's infinite mercy. But when George raises a question challenging this concept too, March feels irritated. He is also afraid that Vera will leave him if this discussion goes on. That is why he refuses to answer any more questions and bids George good-bye.[44] Thus this minister is disgusted with his job and finds it to be a heavy burden. Since he is more interested in love-making than in preaching there is no possibility of his being able to lead his parishioners to God.

The Lutheran pastor in *Of the Farm* does not possess too many weaknesses. But he too is not unstained. His eyes have started orving and the choir of his church has several very pretty women in it.[45] Secondly, his manners are "practiced"[46] rather than natural. The first of these defects is noticed by Mrs. Robinson and the second by Joey. The first weakness hints at the likelihood of his yielding to the sin of adultery.

Reverend Horace Pedrick, in *Couples*, is a Congregational[47] priest. His weakness is money. He has had to lead the life of poverty and never had enough.[48] Born in a poor fishing family, he went to business where he encountered bankruptcy twice.[49] This drove him to the clerical profession against his inclination. Such a priest is again incapable of leading his parishioners to God. This is also indicated by the novelist in *Couples*. Reverend Pedrick's flock at the Congregational church is mainly composed of the practical people who have attained brilliant success in trade. While preaching to them Pedrick transposes even the "desiccated forms of Christianity into financial terms."[50] For example, in order to illustrate that Jesus promises his followers "present security", he says : "....the man Jesus does not ask us to play a long shot. He does not come to us and say, 'Here is a stock for speculation. Buy at eight-and-one eighth, and in the Promised Land you can sell at one hundred.' No, he offers us present security, four-and-a-half percent compounded every quarter!"[51] Likewise, he interprets the incidents narrated in the Bible in terms of money. For example, he interprets the palms spread across Jesus's path to be greenbacks, and the theft of the colt[52] as "a disquistion on property rights."[53] He describes

even God in terms of money and calls Him "a power which treats wealth lightly, which accepts an expensive bottle of ointment and scorns the cost, [and] which dares to overturn the counting tables of respectable bankers and businessmen...."[54] When his church is burnt it is again the problem of money that bothers him most. On learning from Piet that the restoration of the building will need more than half a million dollars, his back is bent as if a very heavy weight had fallen on it. He is overwhelmed with joy on finding that not only the Congregationalists and Catholics are donating freely for the reconstruction of the church but a national foundation has offered to contribute as much as people do.

Thus this priest has secularised faith and has introduced into it, what Reinhold Niebuhr terms, "this worldliness".[55] He is not at all religious minded. Nor does he try to make others so. Transcendence has nothing to do with him. If at all he leaves the consideration of money and associates Church with something else, he identifies it with human beings.[56]

Updike also indicates his belief in the Barthian theory that the church "stands under judgment"[57] and, therefore, should not be allowed to have an independent way. He does it mainly in *Couples* where the Congregationalist church edifice, which symbolizes the Church, receives God's judgment. This edifice is a Greek temple with a cupola and a spire. It has been renovated a number of times : "There edifices had succeeded the first meeting-house, a thatched fort, and the last, renovated in 1896 and 1939, lifted well over one hundred feet into the air, a gilded weathercock that had been salvaged from the previous church and thus dated from the colonial times."[58] This weathercock stands for God worshipped in the churches. That is why the narrator says: "Children in the town grew up with the sense that the bird was God. That is, if God were *[sic]* physically present in Tarbox, it was in the form of this unreachable weathercock visible from everywhere. And if its penny could see, it saw everything, spread below it like a living map."[59] That is why when people look at it they are touched by guilt feelings.

But since this church fails to prevent people from sin[60] God's lightning strikes it: "Now flames, shy flickers of orange, materialized, licking their way up the cupola's base, along the

inside edges of the lowered openings constructed to release the sound of the bell. The bell itself, ponderous sorrowing shape, a capped widow, was illumined by a glow from beneath. Jets of water arched high and fell short, criss-crossing."[61] The bolt strikes the pinnacle, then comes to the steel rod and ignites the dry wood.[62] The judgment of God goes against the practices of this church.

Updike also draws attention to the conflicts between the ministers of various sects and shows the undesirability of this situation. One such conflict is depicted in *Rabbit, Run* in Eccles' family. Eccles' grandfather was the Bishop of Providence. Though he called himself a Darwinian Deist, he "kept his church from going under to the Unitarians by becoming almost Unitarian himself."[63] Eccles' father became orthodox enough to be considered Anglo-Catholic. This brought about a conflict between Eccles' grandfather and father. The grandfather wanted to have a family worship service every night while the father did not like "to bore his children the way he had been bored with God."[64]

The menace of the large number of denominations and their rivalries has been referred to in *The Centaur*. Olinger, the small town in which the novel is set, has, besides the Lutherans [see *supra*] and the Reformed,[65] various sects like the Jehovah's Witnesses,[66] the Baptists[67] and the Roman Catholics.[68] They are torn by mutual rivalries and waste their energies in persuading people for conversion. For example, George who was born in a Presbyterian[69] family is led to become a Lutheran [see *supra*] in the 'Depression'.[70]

By depicting these tensions and conflicts Updike draws the attention of the reader to "the process of decay to which the Church is at once subject when it ceases to live by the Word of God, which means by Holy Scripture."[71] The tensions between the ministers of various sects are shown to be one of the reasons behind the general loss of faith in Christianity. By doing so Updike expresses his agreement with Karl Barth who believes that if there are tensions between several churches "like those between Catholicism and Neo-Protestantism, or like the internal Catholic battles between Realists and Nominalists, Episcopalians and Curialists, Benedictines and Jesuits, or the internal Neo-Protestant between Orthodox and Pietists, 'Positive' and 'Liberals', [then the Church] does not live in the inner movement of these tensions."[72]

In the short story "The Music School" Updike show how the priests pay attention to trivial formalities instead of religiousness. Here a young priest tells the narrator that the attitude of his church has changed a great deal on the question of wafer. The nuns and priests taught the Catholic children for generations that "the wafer must be held in the mouth and allowed to melt: that to touch it with the teeth would be (and this was never doctrine, but merely a nuance of instruction) in some manner blasphemous."[73] But this old opinion has been discarded.

> Now, aimed the flowering of fresh and bold ideas with which the church, like a tundra thawing, responded to that unexpected the late Pope John, there has sprung up the thought that Christ did not say, 'Take and melt this in your mouth' but 'take and eat'. The word is 'eat', and to dissolve the word is to dilute the transubstantiated metaphor of physical nourishment. This deminquaver of theology crystallizes with a beautiful simplicity in the material world; the bakeries supplying the Mass have been instructed to unlearn the science of a dough translucent to the tongue and to prepare a thicker, tougher wafer—a host, in fact, So substantial it *must* be chewed to be swallowed.[74]

This young priest who "plays a twelve-string guitar, smokes mentholated cigarettes, and seemed unembarrassed to find himself sitting socially in a circle of Protestants and non-believers...."[75]

Many churchmen, instead of caring for the saving of the souls of their parishioners, hate them.[76] Henry Palamountain speaks of some such churchmen in the story 'The Christian Roommates' : "My bishop hates me,' he said. 'The one in Oregon, who wants me to be a soldier. I've introduced myself to the bishop here and I don't think he likes me either."[77] Updike also refers to the general complaint of the people against the deterioration of the Church in his short story 'A Madman' and makes the narrator say : "I lay down on the bed beside my wife and read through the lead article, a militant lament on the deterioration of the Norman church at Iffley."[78]

In "Churchgoing" Updike suggests that the church has become more of a social institution than a spiritual one. It is for this reason that he praises the church as a human recreation and as a possessor of several attractions for the eye and the ear : "...what could be more delightful, more unexpected than to enter a venerable and lavishly scaled building kept warm and clean for use one or two hours a week and to sit and stand in unison and sing and recite creeds and petitions that are like paths worn out smooth in the raw terrain of our hearts?"[79] This church has no role to play in guiding man to spiritual attainment.

The priest depicted in this story is an object of pity. He is described as "a poorly paid but resplendently robed man [who] strives to console us with scraps of ancient epistles and halting accounts, hopelessly compromised by words of those intimations of divine joy that are like pain in that, their instant gone, the mind cannot remember or believe them..."[80] His failure to exercise any influence on the listeners signifies the Church's failure to touch the lives of the laity meaningfully.

Updike also refers to various malpractices of the churchmen. One of them is the practice of bribing people into Christianity. It is referred to by the narrator of "A Traded Car" : "After we've got done feeding the furnace and converting the benighted Hindoo there isn't anything left over for you people that are trying to help the poor devils in our own backyard."[81] The brisk brick-faced minister in "Pigeon Feathers" is "a bit misplaced in the Lutheran ministry."[82] He pronounces the word 'Christ' in such a way that it falls "like a burning stone."[83] The minister of "My Grandmother's Thimble" is more interested in games than in his clerical duties : "The minister came with a drawn white face that cracked in relief at finding laughter in the house. At church softball he had broken his ankle sliding into second base, and limped still. His prayers seemed to chip pieces from our hearts and float them away."[84] the 'commandment' of the divinity student of "Lifeguard" is "Be joyful", rather than "Be religious":

> "So : be joyful....It is the message I read in your jiggle. Stretch your skins like pegged hides curing in the miracles of the sun's moment. Exult in your legs' scissoring, your

> waist's swivel, Romp; eat the froth; be children. I am here above you; I have given my youth that you may do this. I wait. The tides of time have treacherous undercurrents. You are borne continually towards the horizon. I have prepared myself; my muscles are instilled with everything that must be done. Some day my alertness will bear fruit; from near the horizon there will arise, delicious translucent, like a green bell above the water, the call for help, the call, a call, it saddens me to confess, that I have yet to hear.[85]

He is still a searcher and has yet to hear the call!

Besides showing the incapability of the priests to influence the development and actions of the sinners, Updike uses the church building as a symbol of Church and indicates its incapability of touching the lives of the characters in a positive manner. It can be seen in the case of Harry Angstrom in *Rabbit, Run*. Harry is visited by guilt feelings. When he finds himself in a state of utter confusion while running away from Ruth's apartment the church window is "unlit, a dark circle in a stone facade."[86] Thus by making this church bereft of light, Updike indicates symbolically that the Church has failed Harry. It arouses the feeling of guilt in Harry's heart, also makes him bow in silent prayer and leads him to crouch for safety but fails to lead him to light.

This does not imply that Updike is an enemy of the church or that he derides it like a heretic. What it suggests is that he wishes the churchmen to reform themselves. The Church, as for Karl Barth,[87] is, for him too, an integral part of Christianity but it is fallible because it is run by human beings who are so easily liable to fall.[88]

The importance of the Church[89] is suggested by Updike by making the ministers utter the spiritual truths, for which he suggests his favour, mainly in *Rabbit, Run* and *Of the Farm* through the Lutheran ministers.

It is through Kruppenbach, the Lutheran minister, that Updike stresses the need of the Church's concentrating on faith in the Scriptures.[90] Kruppenbach expresses with authority the argument against Eccles' case-worker-like approach. He tells Eccles that if God wanted to end misery, the millennium would

already be there and that the duty of a minister towards his parishioners is to "burn them with force of [his] belief.....There is nothing but Christ for [him]."[91] The duty of a minister, according to him, is to pray and be "an examplar of faith."[92] Updike indicates his support for this view by making Eccles also feel in the heart of his hearts that Kruppenbach is right.[93]

Fred L. Standley considers Kruppenbach an embodiment of the worst form of ultra-fundamentalism. He states: "Rev. Fritz Kruppenbach, the Lutheran pastor of the Angstrom family, embodies the worst form of ultra-fundamentalist, sanctimonious ineptitude, and irrelevancy. In a crucial situation for one of the parishioners, the pastor can only mutter the archaic pieties of an irrelevant orthodoxy and resort to prayer as panacea."[94] However, the tale of *Rabbit, Run* evidences that Kruppenbach's approach is not wrong. As a matter of fact the pieties of orthodoxy and prayer are the only things that Harry Angstrom needs. Harry stands in need of an authority figure which Eccles, with his ineffectual meddling, is never likely to be. Faith in the revealed theology alone can bring him out of the morass of the spiritual confusion and it is this that Kruppenbach stresses. Harry needs a dogma rather than advice. And Kruppenbach's approach aims at providing Harry noting else but a dogma.

The minister is *Of the Farm* is Updike's spokesman on the question of man-woman relationship. The sermon of this young Lutheran minister is the account of the creation of woman in Genesis. In his peroration this minister stresses the need of taking the spiritual aspect into consideration while talking about her place in society. He expands upon the idea that woman is "an appeal to the kindness of Man" :

> "So Woman, if I have not misunderstood these verses, was put on earth to help Man do his work, which is God's work. She is less than Man, and superior to him. In designating her with his own generic name, Adam commits an act of faith : 'This is *now* bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.' In so declaring he acknowledges within himself a responsibility to be kind. He ties himself ethically to the earth. Kindness differs from righteousness as the grasses from the stars. Both are infinite. Without conscious confession of God, there can be no

> righteousness. But kindness needs no belief. It is implicit in the nature of Creation, in the very curves and amplitude of God's fashioning."[95]

This sermon gives Joey what he needs to know when he is almost being torn between his mother and wife. It tells him that woman is man's helpmate and man and woman are there on earth "to work together"[96] rather than love one another woman is a finer and more efficient artifact than man while man is "rougher and more ambitious"; and in going to her man does what faith in the Scripture expects him to do.[97] The pastor finds both kindness and righteousness to be infinite though she distinguishes between them. Kindness, according to him, is inherent in Creation while righteousness needs conscious confession of God.[98] And it is in this view that the solution of Joey's problem lies because if he treats his wife as a helpmate, rather than as an object of lust he will no more be led to divorce Peggy and no more to face the repetition of the Joan affair.

John Wesley Caldwell, the minister who figures in *The Centaur*, is Updike's ideal churchman. He entered the Presbyterian ministry after he equipped himself well for the task. He devoted himself whole-heartedly to his duties as a minister and shed his "firmly held faith upon the upturned faces of his flock."[99] The phrase "upturned faces of his flock" signifies that his audience heard him with rapture. He did not give himself to mammonism and had nothing to leave for his son but "a Bible and a bucketful of debts."[100] Even his wife had "energetic piety characteristic of Southern gentlewomen."[101] When Mr. Wesley Caldwell suffered from a lingering illness, it was she who carried on the work of the church and often stepped on the pulpit.[102] What is more significant is that her preaching was very effective and "countless parishioners were to stand indebted to her example of devotion and Christian testimony."[103]

Updike further suggests in *Couples* through the fire incident that the Church needs a reformation rather than a complete abolition. The fire that burns the Congregational church is not allowed to burn the whole of it. Though Pedrick's pulpit is turned into ashes, the rescuers are brought to save all the articles

associated with prayer and the preaching of God's Word. They include the communion service, the heavy walnut altar and pulpit, the brass cross, the portraits of the old divines, stacks of old sermons that are blowing away, sodden and blackening in the unrelenting rain, and a few pin-cushions, new from the last renovation.[104] This symbolically signifies that Updike wishes the superimpositions of the Church to go but its pristine religiousness to remain. The construction of the new church edifice in place of the old one reaffirms this interpretation.

This depiction of the Church amounts to Updike's suggesting that the Church is indispensable for the nourishment of the Christian life of the individuals and for the performance of the tasks of Christianity but in order to become a holy community of grace it has to bring the light of the gospel into the world and revive its pristine religiousness. That is why Updike cannot be identified with the deists who denounced the Church outright, "had no ecclesiastical organization, [and]....cherished a new confidence in the availability and efficacy of man's reason."[105] He, like Karl Barth,[106] wishes the church to remain but wishes the pastors to be exemplars of faith so that they can shed faith on the laity and present examples of devotion and Christian testimony.

REFERENCES

1. George F. Thomas, *Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy* (New York : Charles Scrbner's Sons, 1955), p. 211.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut, Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 67.
5. Geoffrey Chaucer depicted the weaknesses of the churchmen in his *Canterbury Tales*. Referring to them Emile Legouis observes: ".... Chaucer's Benedictine Monk is a fat highly-fed individual, whose sole idea is hunting. The Franciscan Friar is but a clever and prosperous beggar, who uses his gift of fine language to ensure himself a merry life. The Prioress is a pleasant, tender-hearted, rather affected person, who cares more about fine manners than about austerity; her chaplain is a lusty fellow who tells broad stories with zest. The Pardoner represents that cynical class of exploiters with doubtful qualifications,

who speculates and lives richly on popular superstition" [Geoffrey Chaucer, trans., L. Lailavoix (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 150].

6. Updike is quoted to have said in a B.B.C. interview : "The ministers tend increasingly to become the figures of fun, or rather, I'd say, more of a disappointment on the author's part. I seem to have some expectations of the ministry which it doesn't fulfil" ["Realism, Melodrama and the Novel : An Interview with John Updike", (interviewer—Eric Rhode), *The American Review*, XVI (January 1972), p. 54].
7. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 70.
8. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 70.
9. "The Lutheran bodies of America declare that the books of the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God and constitute the sole and perfect rule of faith and life. They also accept the historic creeds (Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian) as conveying the faith of Christians and as being in accord with the Scriptures... Justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ is regarded as the central doctrine of the Word of God, from which all other doctrines are developed. In preaching the Word of God, Law and Gospel are equally emphasized in order to achieve repentence and faith. The two recognized sacraments are those of baptism and of the Lord's Supper, which are regarded as means of grace and not mere memorials or symbols. In the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, Lutherans believe, there is the real presence of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are sacramentally and supernaturally received by the partaking believer" [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States* (New York : Barness and Noble, 1965), pp. 39-40].
10. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 142.
11. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, tarns. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), pp. 68-69.
12. "[Episcopal Church] has been marked by an ability to hold a full Catholic heritage under the control of Reformation principles while opening itself to new intellectual movements, portraying itself as a *via media* between extremes of Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Engagement in ecumenical discussions has concentrated attention upon the church's preservation of an

uninterrupted succession of bishops through the doctrinal and liturgical reform of the sixteenth century and through subsequent upheavals. From a declaration of the church's General Convention in Chicago in 1886 was formed the 'Lambeth Quadrilateral' stating four points upon which Anglicans would enter union negotiations with any Christian body: the Holy Scriptures, the Apostles' and the Nicene Creed, the sacraments of baptism and Supper of the Lord, and the historic episcopate" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 18 (Chicago : William Benton, 1972), p. 657].

13. *The Theology of Reinhold Niebuhr* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), p. 90.
14. Fred L. Standley, "Rabbit, Run : An Image of Life", *Midwest Quarterly*, VIII (July 1967), p. 382.
15. Iwao Iwamoto, "the Vagrant Saint : A Study of John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*", *Studies in American Literature* (Kyoto, Japan : American Literature Society of Japan), Tenth Anniversary Extra Number (1971), p. 58.
16. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), pp. 128-29.
17. The narrator says : "[Eccles' Sermon] concerns the forty days in the Wilderness and Christ's conversation with the Devil. Does this story have any relevance to us, here, now? In the Twentieth Century, in the United States of America. Yes. There exists a sense in which *all* Christians must have conversations with the Devil, must learn his ways, must hear his voice" [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 197].
18. "Faith is fundamental in Christian creed and conduct. It was the one thing which above all others Christ recognized as the paramount virtue. The Syrophoenician women (Matt. 15) had perseverance; the centurion (Matt. 8), humility; the blind man (Mark 10); earnestness. But what Christ saw and rewarded in each of these cases was faith. Faith is the foundation of Peter's spiritual temple (2 Pet. 1 : 5-7); and first in Paul's trinity of graces (1 Cor. 13 : 13). In faith all the other graces find their source" [William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), p. 144].
19. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), pp. 129-30.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-40.
21. Karl Barth, defining the duties of the churchmen, points out : "Jesus sent his Church into the world to proclaim God's reconciliation and to attest God's will to all men in all spheres of life. The acceptance of the Gospel does not place men under an oppressive dictatorship, but brings them rather into glorious liberty. Refusal of the Gospel means remaining under God's

judgment. God wants us to proclaim his Gospel confidently, neither fearing nor seeking to please men" [*Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London and Glasgow : Collins, 1971), p. 54].

22. Robert Detwilber, *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 47.
23. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 197.
24. *Ibid.*
25. This is evident from the following conversation between Harry and Lucy:
"Oh—like the fact that you're not afraid of women."
"Who is?"
"Jack."
"You think."
"Of course. The old ones and teenagers, he's fine with; the ones who see him in his collar. But the others he is very leery of; he doesn't like them. He doesn't really think they even ought to come to church. They bring a smell of babies and bed into it" [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 200].
26. *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans, G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 69.
27. Anatole France also ridicules the Church in his novel *Penguin Island* through Mael, a devout, simple-minded and gullible saint. This saint travels to the arctic zone by a series of marvellous events. There he finds an island inhabited by large numbers of penguins two of whom, Kraken and Oberosia, later conceive a profitable hoax and befool Mael.
28. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 86.
29. Fred L. Standley, "*Rabbit, Run* : An Image of Life", *The Midwest Quarterly*, VIII (July 1967), p. 382.
30. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), 101.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
33. His grand father was the Bishop of Providence and used to call himself a Darwinian Deist. But his father became orthodox like an Anglo-Catholic and loved Belloc and Chesterton [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 106].
34. "*Rabbit, Run* : An Image of Life", *The Midwest Quarterly*, VIII (July 1967), p. 382.
35. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Greenwich, 1970), p. 211.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
37. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Greenwich, 1970), p. 212.
38. "Jesus often rebuked his disciples for their lack of faith. When Peter failed to walk to him on the Water, he said : 'wherefore

didst thou dobut?' (Mt. 14 : 31). Concerning their anxious fears about food and clothing, due to lack of trust in God, he said : 'O ye of little faith' (Mt. 6 : 30). He would teach them that confident trust in God's providence would remove such anxious fears. Faith in God's providential care is not evidenced by shiftlessness and laziness but by quietness and peace of mind. Faith apprehends the order of nature and history as God's control. This order calls for activity on man's part, not shiftless inactivity. But in this activity there should be confident trust in God's care for us. Faith apprehends the order of things in which we live as God's means of caring for us. Hence our activity will be characterized by quiet confidence rather than by feverish fear and apprehension. After the resurrection Jesus rebuked the two on the way to Emmaus for their slowness in believing in all that the prophets had written (Lk. 24 : 25). The implication seems to be that their lack of faith was the cause of their failure to understand and appreciate the prophetic writings" [W.T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament* (Nashville : Broadman Press, 1940), pp. 136-37].

39. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Greenwich, 1970), p. 214.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
42. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Greenwich, 1970), p. 227.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
45. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* Dimmesdale, the priest, commits adultery, though when he is nearing death he declares he is a polluted priest who has compounded his sin of adultery by hiding it cunningly and hypocritically.
46. *Of the Farm* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 149.
47. "American Congregationalism was an outgrowth of Separatist movements in England. Toward the end of the sixteenth century a school of thought developed there in opposition to the state church, holding that the establishment could not be reformed and that the only course for the dissenter was to separate himself from it.... In 1961 the Congregational Christian Churches merged with the Evangelical and Reformed Church to form the United Church of Christ, but some local Congregational Churches which refused to join this merger formed a National Association of Congregational Churches and a Conservative Conference of Congregational Churches" [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States* (New York : Barnes and Noble, 1965), pp. 16-17].
48. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 25.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.
50. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 26.
51. *Ibid.*
52. St. Luke, 19 : 30-34.
53. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 27.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Pious and Secular America* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 8.
56. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 466.
57. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 67.
58. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 21.
59. *Ibid.*
60. See Chapter IV.
61. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 463.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 462-64.
63. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 106.
64. *Ibid.*
65. "[The] theological emphasis [of the Reformed Churches] is Calvinistic in origin. These confessions of faith all stress salvation through Christ as their central theme. They affirm the primacy of God and His power in the affairs of men, and the final authority of the Scriptures as the living word of God, available to all men through the Holy Spirit" [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States* (New York : Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 63].
66. "Jehovah's Witnesses... believe that the Bible plainly teaches that an old world has ended and that the Lord Jesus Christ is making preparations to return to earth. He will then destroy the organization of Satan and establish a complete state of righteousness on earth. In this kingdom those who will have survived Armageddon will carry out Jehovah's mandate to people on earth with a righteous race" [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States*, p. 31].
67. "Baptists insist that the fundamental authority, under Christ, in *church* life is vested in the local congregation of believers, which admits and excludes members, calls and ordains pastors and orders its common life in accord with what it understands to be the mind of Christ" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 3 (Chicago: Benton, 1972), p. 142].
68. "Five principles of [Roman Catholic] ecclesiastical organization may be regarded as basic : (1) the threefold function or power of the priestly office of the church and its ministers; (2) the

establishment of a distinct order, the clergy, as the subject of ministerial and jurisdictional authority; (3) the hierarchical disposition of this order; (4) the hierarchical mode of conferring authority in the church; (5) the active participation of all members of the church in the realization of its total mission in the world" (*Ibid.*, p. 465).

69. "In the United States, Presbyterians generally hold to the principles of the undivided sovereignty of God in the Universe He created, the sovereignty of Christ in salvation, the sovereignty of the Scriptures in matters of faith and conduct, and the sovereignty of the individual conscience in scriptural interpretation" [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States* (New York : Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 56].
70. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 159.
71. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 75.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *The Music School* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1967), p. 138.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*, p. 140.
76. Disparaging this attitude Karl Barth states : "We disobey our Lord's command and fail to love our neighbour if we withhold the comfort of the Gospel from troubled consciences, but also if we remain silent about contemporary sins. When the Church shrinks from attesting God's will in every sphere of life, then even its preaching of the forgiveness of sins becomes restricted and ineffective" [*Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London and Glasgow, Collins, 1971), p. 55].
77. *The Music School* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1967), p. 103.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
79. *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 172.
80. *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 172.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
83. *Ibid.*
84. *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 160.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-52.
86 *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett), p. 254.

87. According to Karl Barth dogmatics "is an activity that must be carried on within the Church, as the place where the preaching or proclamation of the Word occurs. Thus the theologian's continuous concern is to test the doctrine and preaching of the Church, which, because it is carried on through human beings, is liable to go astray" [*The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Vol. I, editor-in-chief Paul Edwards (New York : Macmillan; London : Free Press, 1967), p. 250].

88. Karl Barth states : "The church is the temporal aspect of the body of Christ and its members. As such, she bears every stamp of human imperfection. She lies under the sign of 'Not yet'. And there is no reason to be surprised and saddened that this provisional condition shows up, at every age in the time of the Church, in a really humiliating and pitiful manner" [*The Faith of the Church* (London and Glasgow : Collins, 1967), p. 118].

89. George F. Thomas acknowledges the indispensability of the Church for Christianity in the following words :
"The church is the bearer of the Gospel, the custodian of the special revelation of God to Israel which culminated in the person and work of Christ, and it transmits the Gospel from generation to generation through its preaching. It is also the fellowship within which, by the help of God, the Gospel bears its moral fruits in life. Therefore, the Christian is dependent upon the Church for both his knowledge of the Gospel and the power to practices it as a way of life. Theough the 'means of grace' provided by the Church, the Gospel is first proclaimed to him and awakens his faith. Though the life of its fellowship and of the Christian family, he begins to understand the meaning of love and to respond to its appeal. Thus, the Christian is dependent upon the Church for his spiritual and moral life as a child is dependent upon his mother" [*Christian Ethics and Moral Philosophy* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 211-12].

90. Karl Barth observes : "By its message and its order the Church must demonstrate that it is its Lord's own and that it wants to obey him. It is true that it cannot simply read from Scripture what its order is to be now and for ever; the form of the Church is subject to change. Yet, even allowing for historical circumstances, the Church must conform to its essence, must not contradict Scripture, and must serve the fulfilment of its commission. It is therefore part of its responsibility to its Lord to determine its order" [*Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London and Glasgow : Collins, 1971), p. 61].

91. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 143.
92. *Ibid.*
93. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
94. "*Rabbit, Run* : An Image of Life", *The Midwest Quarterly*, VIII (July 1967), p. 382.
95. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), pp. 153-54.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
98. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), p. 154.
99. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 156.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
102. *Ibid.*
103. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 156.
104. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 462.
105. Randell Stewart, *American Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1958), p. 22.
106. Barth holds : "There, in Him (i.e. Christ), it is not unworthy and not incapable of speaking about God. There it is all that it has to be for this purpose. There it has everything that it needs for it. There it is justified and sanctified, blessed and authorised in its action. There the miracle has already happened which has to happen to a man if he is to speak about God—really speak about God. The Church looks to Jesus Christ. It allows Him to be its own life, and therefore, its consolation. It does not cling to its own humanity—either in arrogance or diffidence—but to the task imposed upon it in its own humanity. And as it does so, it can confess, but with a final certainty, that as it speaks about God in human words, it proclaims God's own Word" [*Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 70].

6

Egoistic Approach Leads to Anarchy

However, the depiction of the fallibility of the Church does not imply that Updike trusts human reason, man's natural impulses or individual conscience. Nor does it mean that he posits his belief in the theory that in the affairs of spiritualism man should be allowed to depend on himself in defiance of the Word of God. On the contrary, he indicates his disbelief in the views which stand for a man's relying on himself rather than on the revealed theology because:

> The knowledge of God comes to us as a gift, and to indicate its distinctiveness by the Word "revelation" is simply to remain true to the phenomenological analysis of belief in God, for such belief testifies that God makes Himself known to us rather than that we attain to the knowledge of Him. The Bible never suggests that man has to strain his mind to figure out a shadowy Something behind the phenomena. There is indeed recognition of man's innate quest for God, but God Himself meets and satisfies the quest. Man does not search out God, but rather the reverse is true.[1]

He depicts the Christian view, implied in the concept of Original Sin, that man is easily fallible and liable to succumb to sin.[2] He does it by showing that the characters who disbelieve the revealed theology either find their approaches futile or find themselves in the grip of sin. Updike also punishes his sinners and this indicates his belief in the Christian doctrine which "insists to the last that man is fallible and responsible, that he is responsible though fallen."[3]

The novels in which these views find projection are *The Poorhouse Fair, Rabbit, Run, Couples,* and *Rabbit Redux*. In all these novels some characters are shown relying on themselves—on their reason, natural impulses or conscience—and then learning that self-reliance.[4] in the matters of spiritualism, can lead one only to sin and damnation rather than to salvation.

Updike suggests a derision of human reason in *The Poorhouse Fair* by presenting Conner as a rationalist—a man too enamoured of the function of reason in life. His love for reason is indicated in several ways : the narrator calls him a rationalist envying the martyrdoms of the first rationalists;[5] he rejects Christianity because its beliefs are not grounded on reason.[6] J.A. Ward calls him "a disciple of the rationalistic order."[7] He tries to comprehend the secrets behind the existence of the universe with the aid of reason and tries to discover the laws that govern it. Rejecting what the Bible says he arrives at the conclusion: "The truth is...that if the universe was made, it was made by an idiot, and an idiot crueller than Nero. There are no laws. Atoms and animals alike do what they can't help doing."[8] His belief in the theory that man is the descendent of apes and monsters[9] signifies his accepting the theory of evolution propounded by Darwin,[10] rather than in the biblical view, namely: ".....God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he thme."[11] He accepts what stands sound on the basis of reason and rejects everything else. He believes himself to be too enlightened to take the long leap of irrational faith. Reason, for him, has practically become a creative principle—something identical with God—and he seems to hold, as is the case with Hegel, that "it is just logical Reason which is that substantial or real, which holds together in itself all abstract determinations, and is their solid, absolutely concrete, reality."[12]

Again, it is reason that leads him to believe that his is the position of a primitive deity who seeks chumminess with the "member[s]...of humanity."[13] He goes to the extent of accepting the role of an ineffectual tribal god and being prepared to accept the blame for foul skies.[14] Likewise, on being stoned he takes on himself the task of forgiving the inmates[15] and unlike Christ who prayed to God, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,"[16] leaves nothing for Him to do.

The novelist shows the hollowness of this approach[17] by depicting Conner's failure to explain the mystery of the universe by his rationalistic arguments and by making him behave in an irrational way. The contradictions which abound in Conner's arguments convey the same effect. Conner, while arguing with Hook against the existence of God,[18] loses himself in the web of reason and starts arguing against his own thesis. He starts with a belief in the theory that the creation is the outcome of an accident and the nothingness is its chief quality. But when his reason fails to explain how this creation came out of nothing, he deserts reason and rushes to capture presumptions. One of his presumptions is that something was always there, though it was very little. This presumption is irreconcilable with his main thesis. The view that the universe is entirely empty is diametrically opposed to the view that something was always there. They cannot co-exist. But Conner's reason turns a blind eye to this fact.

Reinhold Niebuhr is right when he claims: "The idea of creation is a typical mythical idea. It relates the source of life to observable life in terms which defy rationality."[19] But Conner tries to explain it with reason and encounters a failure. He pictures the creation as a mechanism held together by the mechanical processes which he believes science has discovered.[20] "But, in fact, there is no meaning and only superficial unity in the creation," he explains. His approach is also destructive of human vitality because if there is no purpose in life worthy of man's striving, it cannot be regaded as worth-living. "A purely mechanical world is bereft of purpose and meaningfulness."[21] As a matter of fact, Conner's arguments contradict his own theory. On the one hand, he stands for social progress, but, on the other, he is unable to give the universe a purpose and meaning. "It is only through the myth of creation that it is

possible to assert both the meaningfulness of life and the fact of evil. To say that God created the world is to assert its meaningfulness; and to distinguish between the creator and his creation is to make a place for the reality of evil in the relativities of time and history."[22] Conner refuses to believe in the myth of creation. But if the universe is meaningless, there is no reason why he should think of improving it and of making it a more pleasant place. In that case it deserves sheer rejection.

The debate between Hook and Conner about the mystery of the universe, Conner's failure to explain it and regarding life as something meaningless imply the author's upholding Niebuhr's view : "Yet such naive notions as providence and creation, progressively discredited by empirical sciences, are valid and necessary components of any scheme of meaning. They derive their permanent relevance because they express a basic trust in the meaningfulness of human existence. The Book of Job is the most striking statement of this trust, which is affirmed despite, and because of the experience of confusion, cross-purposes and meaninglessness in human life."[23] What Updike suggests is that reliance on human reason leads one to distrust God's plan, lose faith in life, call God an idiot, and consider man a monster. Thus Updike depicts not only the incapability of human reason to grasp the mysteries of the universe but also the dangers that accompany the rationalistic approach.

Updike expresses his distrust of reason in his poem "Fever" where he protests the veneer of reason and explicitly states that reason is incapable of answering the ultimate questions:

> I have brought back a good message from the land of 102°:
> God exists.
> I had seriously doubted it before; but the bedposts spoke of it with utmost confidence, the threads in my blanket took it for granted, the tree outside the window dismissed all complaints, and I have not slept so justly for years. It is hard, now, to convey how emblematically appearances sat upon the membranes of my consciousness; but it is a truth long known, that some secrets are hidden from health.[24]

Updike also suggests a rejection of natural theology "which ascends to a natural knowledge of God by way of the unaided intellect."[25] He does it in *The Poorhouse Fair* by showing Hook's failure to make Conner believe in theism. Hook gives two main arguments to prove the existence of God: first, that the "inner spokesmen" of man tend to believe that God exists,[26] and second, that the universe itself is a proof of His existence.[27] The argument that the universe itself is a proof of God's existence is a cosmological argument—an argument which "purports to demonstrate the existence of God from the existence of the world, or some part of it."[28] In this case Hook takes the help of neither the Scripture nor any prophet. He argues that since there is a creation, there must be a creator. The way the stars are arranged in the sky again proves God's existence for him.[29] If the task of arranging these stars had been given to Conner, Hook holds, he would have given them a geometrical pattern or would have arranged them so as to make an instructive sentence.[30] Thus Hook's response to the existing order of cosmos comes quite close to the Psalmists' exclamation : "The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork"[31] and implies that he believes the universe to be the vast array of orderly and positive activity. This view joins him with the champions of the teleological theory of God—a theory that "reasons from the apparent design in the universe to the existence of a Designer."[32] All these arguments of Hook exhibit that he is a philosophical or natural theologian trying to argue Conner into theism. But Hook fails to convert Conner[33] who remains an atheist even at the end of the novel.

Updike reiterates his rejection of the natural theology in *Rabbit, Run* by presenting Harry Angstrom who goes much further than Hook in this field. Harry is faced by a crisis which demands "moral choices and religious decisions concerning the matters of life and death."[34] He, instead of choosing to be a faithful Christian, chooses to be a preacher of natural theology and attempts "to attain knowledge of God through *lumen naturale*, man's 'natural light' independently of special revelation."35 He turns away from the Church and her God and goes in quest of a new God of his own will.[36] He is religious in his own way: he calls himself "the Dalai Lama",[37] and preaches the theology he has formulated unaided by any Scripture. Instead of accepting

the Christian doctrine he chooses to live instinctively. His leaving Janice and stepping into the world of Ruth also symbolizes his stepping out of the shelter of Christianity and the Christian God. His quest for a new God is implied in his answer to Eccles' question as to why he left Janice: "'I told ja. There was this thing that wasn't there.' 'What thing? Have you ever seen it? Are you sure it exists?' ....'Well if you're not sure it exists, don't ask me. It's right up your alley. If you don't know, nobody does.'"[38] Eccles, as a professional minister, warns him against trying to become a new Christ and says that it was settled centuries ago in the heresies of the early Church. But Harry sticks to his conviction still maintaining that he can succeed in his quest:

"I tell you, I know what it is."

"What is it? What *is* it? Is it hard or soft? Harry. Is it blue? Is it red? Does it have polka dots?"

It hits Rabbit depressingly that he really wants to be told. Underneath all this I-know-more-about-it-than-you heresies-of-the-early-Church business he really wants to be told about it, wants to be told that it is there, that he's not lying to all those people every Sunday.[39]

Ignoring the minister's questions he keeps on playing golf.[40] He looks at the ball and hits it so hard that it beautifully flies into the air receding along a line straight as a ruler-edge. It makes him exclaim "That is it!"[41] And this is an answer to Eccles' question. What Harry is looking for takes after the ball making a beautiful flight over the green course. It gives him a complete emancipation from the Christian God and even a sense of being God himself. He had the same feelings while playing the basket ball game and has them later at the time of the funeral of his daughter, Rebecca [see *supra*].

In both theology and ethics he depends on his natural light. He has a code of conduct of his own based on his own gospel. He associates both alcohol and cards with "a depressing kind of sin" and "sin with bad breath."[42] He also decides to give up smoking and throws his pack into a garbage can.[43] He fears God, though his God is not the God of either the Old Testament or the New Testament. The God of his belief is the God who

wants him (Harry) to find Him. Harry expects his God to help him in every affair of life.[44] For example, he wants Him to have come to save his child from getting drowned.[45] Likewise, at the funeral of his daughter he wishes Him to do a miracle:....the deep purple curtain covering the platform should withdraw apart and reveal a living baby underneath.[46]

Harry's theology is based on what his impulses tell him. He believes in the existence of an unseen world because this feeling is instinctive to him. He also believes for the same reason that his actions constitute transactions with that unseen world. Revealed theology has nothing to do with his views on spiritualism. His instinct-based theology leads him to glorify his ways and regard himself as a founder of a new religion—an idea that excites him immensely. He equates himself with the prophets and founders of various religions out to save the world just by doing whatever his instincts ask him to do. He believes his impulses to be the inspired ones and expects a revelation waiting for him : "Well I don't know this about theology, but I'll tell you. I do feel, I guess, that somewhere behind all this....there's something that wants me to find it."[47] Thus he has made theology *his* theology by treating it as a tool of his own. It is "the doctrine of a union of man with God existing outside God's revelation in Jesus Christ."[48] He makes himself a Christ—for himself at least if nobody else is willing to accept him as one—and an authority to be obeyed.[49] Though a number of warnings against it are given to him, he turns a deaf ear to all of them. He separates theology from its source by which it should be constantly repaired and renewed and that is why it hardens into a system which is not only obsolete and entirely useless but also dangerous.

Harry ignores the prescriptive values of Christianity which with its "Thou shalts" and "Thou shalt nots"[50] can provide him with an inclusive and commanding system of personal and cosmic values and explanations. While watching the Mouseketeer programme with Janice, his wife, he learns from Jimmy that the old Greek saying 'Know Thyself' means 'Be Thyself'.[51] This advice becomes the sole guiding principle of his thinking and makes him act instinctively. His view is further strengthened when he receives advice from his coach that he should be guided by the commands of his heart.[52] Eccles tells him the whole truth

of his philosophy : "...You worship nothing except your worst instincts."[53] This leads him to violate all rules—not only of the Christian ethics but also of the games. Even in golf he often violates the laws and commits blunders. Mountain-climbing and running appeal to him because in them he is not ferreted by any laws. He goes to the extent of becoming a preacher of the 'instinct sect'.[54] and tries to convince all his associates to accept his faith. For example, he justifies the 'Be Yourself' creed before Eccles by maintaining that God wants a waterfall to be a waterfall rather than a tree.[55] likewise, he explains to Ruth : "If you have the guts to be yourself....other people'll pay your price."[55]

The church, the symbol of the revealed theology, which is represented here by Eccles, doe s not find favour with this natural theologian. Eccles, for him, is merely a bundle of weaknesses.[58] When he goes to church he hardly listens to the sermon and leads himself to believe that he has "no taste for... Christianity, the going *through* quality of it, the passage *into* death and suffering that redeems and invests these things like an umbrella blowing inside out."[58]

Through Harry's career Updike suggests that natural theology, far from leading one to salvation, leads one to sin. Harry's belief in the potential divinity of his own being turns him into a sinner and leads him to natural depravity and the sensations of flesh. Even if the feelings of remorse visit him, his theology does not allow them to have a grip on his and to bring him to a state of spiritual health. He loses all sense of morality and is rendered incapable of discriminating between good and bad. Some of the radio songs he listens to like 'If I Didn't Care', 'Let's Stroll', and 'Turn Me Loose'[59] objectify his thinking and signify that he is, in fact, strolling and has turned loose. He violates the commandments[60] : creates a God of his own, leaves his wife, makes Ruth pregnant and wishes to bed down with Lucy, the priest's wife. Likewise, he is unable to judge correctly whether the advice that is being given to him is wholesome or not. He rejects the wholesome advice and accepts the unwholesome one.[61]

The novelist goes to the extent of identifying Harry with an animal. It is for this purpose that Harry is nicknamed 'Rabbit' and is made to act like this animal. He is depicted as a person for whom the solution to all his problems lies in a flight. He is

shown doing the whole thinking with his skin rather than with his brains. He is presented as being extremely sensitive on the surface. Even the appearance given to him is that of a rabbit: a white face, the blue irises, a nervous flutter under his small nose and the nibble of the upper lip.[62] This natural theologian has been shown to be conscious of his animality. It is for this reason that he is shown identifying himself with animals. For example, when Tothero takes him to Ruth and Margaret, he introduces himself as "Harry... or Rabbit."[63] Likewise, in the hospital, when his wife is in labour, he fears he will not be the father of a human child and see will give birth to a monster.[64] This signifies that this natural theologian, in the eyes of Updike, is no more *Imagia Dei* but a sub-rational and servile organism living out his days in a physical environment of drive, stimulus and response.

The novelist also depicts the ensnarement into which Harry is driven by the natural light. Harry himself begins to realize that "some great confused system...[is] reaching for him"[65] while on his flight from Mount Judge to the "South" he feels the road to be a part of the trap into which he has fallen.[66] The map with its red and blue lines and stars, is, for him, a net in which he is caught somewhere.[67] This trap, later on, comes to him in a more meaningful form. He swings between his wife and his beloved like a pendulum. On the one hand, he does not wish to divorce Janice but on the other, he wishes to retain Ruth as his beloved. It is impossible for him to make a choice between the two. On being confronted by Ruth's forceful demand that he must make a choice, he confesses : "I don't know any of these answers. All I know is what feels right. You feel right to me. Sometimes Janice used to. Sometimes nothing does."[68] This is the state of having fallen from the state of enjoying Divine grace. He is at the disposal of the Devil. "And the righteous God punishes men who are at the disposal of the Devil in this world."[69]

Harry's philosophy leads him to egotism and abysmal selfishness.[70] He shows no consideration for others and pays no attention to the consequences of what he does. He treats Ruth as his wife without worrying about the fact that he has to leave either Janice or Ruth. He leaves Ruth when she needs his protection and leaves Janice when she wants him. Since he

does not honour the values prescribed by the Scriptures and obeys his own religion he gets into the entanglements of various sorts and loses every kind of relief. He disobeys all the "figures of authority."[71] Father is one expected figure of authority. Mr. Angstrom, Harry's father, fails to touch Harry in the least mainly because Harry goes on finding faults with him. For example, Harry recalls an incident of his childhood when his father cut a strip of grass and told a lie that it was cut by the neighbour himself.[72]

This egotism further leads him to alienation. His participation in the basket-ball game with the small boys in the opening part of the novel symbolizes his alienation. Harry invites himself to play with the boys who feel surly to see his skill and reject him. He realizes that the boys do not want him to play with them and then he withdraws.[73] Being an adult he will definitely be an alien among the kids who do not like him at all. It is exactly this that happens throughout the novel. Harry is alienated from his family, his parents, his in-laws and Ruth. At the same time he is rejected by all. At the end he becomes a stranger in a cage which he cannot break and in which he runs in a circular way. He senses this alienation and prefigures it: "Is it just these people I'm outside or is it all America?"[74] He has no domestic bliss, no friend, and, when he runs from Ruth's apartment, no place to turn to. His waywardness is condemned by his father, his mother-in-law, Lucy and even Eccles' daughters. Since he follows a "zigzag course of a weak, sensual, selfish and confused moral bankrupt"[75] his life becomes the life of desperation and relentless despair. He is punished so severely because he knowingly disobeys the Christian teachings.[76]

Similar is the case with his spiritual belief. Doubt disturbs him and his natural faith is of no help. His life becomes a sequence of grotesque poses assumed to no purpose, and a magic dance empty of belief. His rootless theology gives him no intelligible understanding. He finds himself unable to answer the question : "Why am I me?"[77] The end to which this self-styled Jesus comes is : "Coldness spreads through his body and he feels detached, as if he is, what he's always dreaded, walking on air."[78] This is the state of, what is termed as, metaphysical homelessness or spiritual isolation.[79] In fact, Harry is a heretic who has tried to become a Christ—and hence God—

and to feel freed of the Christian God. That is why he meets the punishment that a heretic[80] deserves.

Gerry Brenner opines that Updike criticizes the 'return to nature' theory in this novel. He maintains:

> "... Updike's focus upon the consequences of Rabbit's unconsidered blithe actions criticizes with calm insistence the omnipresent desire to 'return to nature' by showing the logical extension of that desire. Moreover, he shows that instead of just a vague romantic idea, it has become an integrated part of reality. Like all the values whose worth is depreciated in the 20th century, the value of returning to nature, for example has been immersed in the world of daily action, a colloquialization of the ideal. And made accessible, it is adulterated and abused until it is converted into a distorted way of life."[81]

But if Updike's purpose in this novel had been merely to criticise the 'return to nature' theory, he would not have made the protagonist talk repeatedly about the questions of theology and ethics [see *supra*]? Apparently these references to the problems of theology and ethics signify that Updike's main purpose in this novel is to depict his views on the spiritual questions. It is for this purpose that Harry is depicted as a mystic who has given himself to the quest of God.[82] In fact, Harry's desire to found a new religion makes him a preacher of natural theology rather than a champion of the 'return to nature' theory. And by depicting him yield to sin Updike suggests a rejection of his theology.

According to Granville Hicks the vision that *Rabbit, Run* embodies is "a vision of good struggling in a morass of evil..."[83] But Harry Angstrom's action cannot be regarded as the struggle of good against evil. Harry's actions are merely the responses of his impulses to the circumstances around him and lead him to depravity and sin. In fact, his actions shoot forth from his disregard for the Christian doctrine [see *supra*] rather than from his goodness. Nor can the opinion of J.A. Ward that Updike takes a "sympathetic view of irresponsibility"[84] be accepted. If Updike had taken a sympathetic view of irresponsibility he would not have depicted Harry as a sinner and would have

remained satisfied just with giving a record of Harry's flights. Since Updike portrays in Harry a person who has fallen deep into the morass of sinfulness, and encounters punishment for it, it is wrong to believe that this novelist takes a sympathetic view of irresponsibility.

Rabbit in *Rabbit Redux* too depends on his intuitions, though this time he is not on an inner light trip and does not consider himself to be a founder of a new religion. His intuitions have now made him a conformist. In the words of the narrator : "...Rabbit is locked into his intuition that to describe any of America's actions as a 'power play' is to miss the point. America is beyond power, it acts as in a dream, as a face of God. Wherever America is, there is freedom, and wherever America is not, madness rules with chains, darkness strangles millions."[85] He adheres to conformity so much that he justifies whatever his secular country is indulging in. He identifies himself with America and justifies all that it stands for. He is all huddled into himself. He is fully conscious that his inner light trip simply bruised his surroundings. Now he hates every kind of revolution and believes that a revolution leads only to a mess. But still he depends on his instincts.[86] Jill rightly says to him : "Your life has no reflective content; it's all instinct, and when your instincts let you down, you have nothing to trust... Your thought is frozen because the first moment when your instincts failed, you raced to the conclusion that everything is nothing, that zero is the real answer."[87] And, in fact, he is able to act only so long as his instinct guides him.

But this does not save him from sin. He submits to lechery and the demands of the Devil. Lechery comes to him as Jill, and the Devil enters his home as Skeeter. He is unable to distinguish between good and bad and loses all sense of religiousness. He devotes his days and nights to lechery. Whether he goes to his friends or stays at home, sinful sex always haunts him.

Self-reliance appears in the shape of ego in *Of the Farm* where the cause of ego is championed by Mrs. Robinson. Joey, her son, too calls her "too egocentric".[88] Though she goes to the church and listens to the sermon, she refuses to accept the priest as an authority figure and to believe his views on the creation, and the relationship between man and woman. Instead she wishes

herself to be taken as an authority figure. If she loves Nature and likes its various beauties, she wishes others also to do the same. She goes to the extent of forcing the family to shift to her farm. She is fearfully sensitive to any suggestion that she is being ousted. She deliberately smashes the plates so that she may not be forgotten by her son and daughter-in-law. She wanted her husband to be a farmer, then she wanted her son to be a farmer and now she tries to persuade Richard to be a farmer. She uses all the weapons in her arsenal—memories, maternal respect, family pride, age, illness and her egocentric religion—to make Joey do what she wants.

Updike depicts the undesirable consequences of this egoistic view. Mrs. Robinson's egocentric nature brings nothing else but family tensions and death. By bringing her husband to her farm she shortened his life and expediated his death. Then her ego led her to the poisoning of Joey's first marriage. Joey too accuses her of not letting him live happily with his second wife.[89]

Updike suggests a rejection of 'piety'[90] in *Couples*. In this novel he presents the pietistic temperament through Piet. Even the name of this character echoes it. Pietistic—perfectionism has given the "concept of the omni-competent, self-governing, self-reliant common man."[91] Pietism in America "undermined the conception of a learned clergy and of rule by the predestined elect."[92] In the evangelistic fervour engendered by the Awakening, pietists of all kinds gradually abandoned the emphasis on a limited atonement and worked their way toward the doctrines of free will, free grace and immediate salvation open to all men."[93] John Updike's Piet has this very temperament. He trusts himself and his conscience. His distrust of authority is suggested through several things. He distrusts the authority figures in religion and regards himself as a minister and an authority figure. This feeling finds projection in his dream that he is "an old minister making calls."[94] He has an instinct for freedom and this is reflected in his political views too. He is a republican "under the impression that it was the party of anarchy."[95] This implies that if this party had been a party insisting on imposed discipline, he would not have joined it and it is only the anarchy of the party that has attracted him to it.

The only thing that guides him is his conscience. Updike suggests it in a number of ways. First, Janet calls him a man

of conscience.[96] Secondly, adultery gives him terrible sensations of remorse. He prays whenever he finds himself in trouble. As Harry Angstrom of *Rabbit, Run* takes recourse to running whenever he finds himself encountering a crisis, this pietistic man, in similar situations, takes recourse to praying. He acknowledges : "All I can do is let things happen and pray."[97] He regards himself as a pious man better than all the others in town. That is why Freddy ironically addresses him as "pious Piet".[98] But Piet's prayer is far removed from a Christian prayer. It is, like the Emersonian prayer, a soliloquy.[99] Piet finds the church to be a place of attraction on account of its light and music. It brings to his mind the image of his daughters and the memory of his dead parents. He, instead of talking to God, goes on talking to himself.

He, like the Pietists,[100] establishes direct relation between himself and God and is anxious about guarding his soul. He is also afraid of being damned and requests Angela not to divorce him.[101] His having Angela as his wife confirms his being a pietist. Angela is called "the last lady in town to fall"[102] "the most sublimated woman",[103] a "disciplinarian",[104] the messenger of Calvinist God[105] and "town conscience".[106] She warns Piet of his fall and arouses guilt feelings in his heart.[107]

Updike suggests his distrust of this pietistic temper by depicting that Piet is unable to save himself from sin in spite of his conscience. When Piet comes to Tarbox, he is different from the people of this town. But here the temptation to commit sin is too strong for him to resist. Though he fears Freddy, the high priest of the sinful religion of Tarbox, yet he gives him a hostage. He cannot resist the demands of Foxy, who symbolizes temptation. He starts justifying adultery to be "a way of giving yourself adventures. Of getting out in the world and seeking knowledge."[109] At last he reaches a state of being "a Christian living in a state of sin".[109]

Updike allegorizes the view that conscience cannot save man from sin by letting Angela go into the grips of Freddy Thorne. Since Angela, the conscience, is unbelieving and has no faith in God's Word, she fails to exercise any influence on Piet's life. Freddy Thorne, the Lord of Misrule, has a persistent desire to have Angela (Piet's conscience) in his grip. As soon as Piet gets entangled in the Foxy affair and Foxy conceives

the second time, Freddy throws his trap and catches Piet. Piet has to submit his wife to Freddy. This embodies the view that one cannot guard one's conscience from becoming Satan's prey. Angela's readily agreeing to go to Freddy illustrates that conscience is easily liable to fall a prey to Satan's designs.

Updike's *Rabbit Redux* derides some of the oriental theologies, which are again philosophical theologies, through Jill. Jill discusses theology with Nelson and tries to convert him to her belief. Her theology is a mixture of several theologies. Its kinship with the oriental theologies is suggested, first, by the fact that she possesses and reads the books of oriental theologies[110] like Zen[111] and *Yoga*.[112] Her God is an Ultimate Power eliciting man's devotion,[113] and an omnipresent being who is, there "in the tiger as well as in the lamb."[114] Explaining her view that God is a Doer, she points out : "He does everything...by the way. Not because it's what He has to do."[115] According to her God's creation has a definite plan behind it, its balance is never lost and the different parts of the universe are correlated with one another in a systematic way. Explaining it to Nelson she points out : "The world is what God made and it doesn't stink of money, it is never tired, too much or too little, it's always exactly full. The second after an earthquake, the stars are calm. Everywhere is *play*, even in thunder or an avalanche. Out on my father's boat I used to look up at the stars and there seemed to be invisible strings between them, tuned absolutely right, playing thousands of notes I could almost hear."[116]

Like Zen Buddhism which "refuses to follow blindly doctrines and scriptures....."[117] it is an outcome of Jill's intuition or personal enlightenment. As Zen Buddhism "urges its follower to find in himself the answer to any question raised from within himself, because the answer is believed to be found where the question is"[118] her theology is not grounded on any Scripture. Explaining her view of the relation between matter and spirit she remarks: "...matter is the mirror of spirit. But it's three-dimensional, likes an enormous room, a ballroom. And inside it are these tiny *other* mirrors tilted this way and that and throwing the light back the wrong way. Because to the big face looking in, these little mirrors are just dark spots, where He can't see himself."[119] This view comes quite close to Ramanuja's view that "souls and matters are comprehended within the unity of the supreme

as attributes to the substance or parts to a whole or body to soul which animates it."[120] Since, according to her, the smaller mirrors (God's creatures) throw the light back in a wrong way, her belief resembles Shankar's doctrine of *Maya* which is "the veil of ignorance [and which] conceals from the soul the truth."[121] Her view that God is omnipresent [see *supra*] resembles Madhava's belief that God is "all-pervading".[122] But Updike, by making this girl meet an unhappy death, the wages of sin, suggests that her ways and theology are not worth following.

REFERENCES

1. John Macquarrie, "How is Theology Possible?", *New Theology No. 1*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p.. 31.
2. "But 'Let him that stands take care lest he fall!' Dear friends, there can be no question that essentially we all live at the edge of an abyss, where the fall into evil, folly and malice in thought, word and deed is at all times terribly close to us. That is true even if we would like to be Christians, and even if we are supposed to be Christians : 'Temptation has often come upon many a pious man unexpectedly.' No, we cannot indeed believe in our characters or in the good in ourselves. We cannot even believe in our own faith. That could only turn out badly" [Karl Barth, *Call for God : New Sermons from Basel Prison* trans. A. T. Mackay (London : S.C.M. Press, 1967), p. 17].
3. Randal Stewart, *American Literature and Chrsitian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1958), p. 146.
4. R. W. Emerson, the chief exponent of Transcendentalism in America, expounded the theory of self-reliance. He deified man and rejected the theory of Original Sin. He wrote in his essay "Self-Reliance":

   "Trust thyself : every heart vibrates to that iron-string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connexion of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the Eternal was stirring at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not pinched in a corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but redeemers and benefactors, pious aspirants to be noble clay under the Almighty effort let us advance on Chaos

and the Dark" [*Essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Irwin Edman (New York : Crowell Company, 1961), p. 33].

5. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 60.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
7. "John Updike's Fiction", *Critique* V (spring-Summer 1962), p. 30.
8. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 100.
9. *Ibid.*
10. "... Darwin's work has been the demonstration that the evolution of plants and animals, and of the adaptations which they show, provides no evidence of divine or providential guidance or purposive design, because natural selection of fortuitous variations gives a scientifically satisfactory explanation of evolution without any necessity for miraculous interposition or supernatural interference with the ordinary laws of nature. This fact led to a conflict between the upholders of orthodox revealed religion and the scientists. Darwin himself was well aware of the significance of this conflict. 'My theology is a simple muddle,' he wrote in 1870; 'I cannot look at the universe at the result of blind chance, yet I can see no evidence of beneficent design, or indeed of design of any kind, in the details" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 7 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 84].
11. Genesis, 1 : 27.
12. *Science and Logic*, Vol. I, tarns. W.H. Johnston and L.G. Struthers (London : George Allen and Unwin; New York : Macmillan, 1959), p. 58.
13. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 22.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
16. St. Luke, 23 : 34.
17. Reinhold Niebuhr condemns the use of reason in theology in the following words : "Religious faith cannot be simply subordinated to reason or made to stand under its judgment. When this is done, the reason which asks the question whether the God of religious faith is plausible has already implied a negative answer in the question because it has made itself God" [*The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol. I (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 165].
18. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 89-100.
19. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Truth in Myths", *Faith and Politics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York : George Braziller, 1968), p. 18.
20. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), pp. 100-101.

21. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Truth in Myths", *Faith and Politics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York : George Braziller, 1968), p. 20.
22. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Truth in Myths", *Faith and Politics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York : George Braziller, 1968), p. 20.
23. "Faith as the Sense of Meaning in Human Existence", *Faith and Politics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York : George Braziller, 1968), p. 8.
24. *Seventy Poems* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1972), p. 27.
25. Ed. L. Miller, *God and Reason : A Historical Approach to Philosophical Theology* (New York : Macmillan, 1972), p. 21.
26. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 99.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
28. Ed. L. Miller, *God and Reason* (New York : Macmillan, 1972), p. 43.
29. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 100.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Psalms, 19 : 1.
32. Ed. L. Miller, *God and Reason* (New York : Macmillan, 1972), p. 65.
33. While explaining the futility of the metaphysical speculations Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman point out : "What shall be the apologetic approach of a theologian who takes seriously the fact that he lives in a world marked by a pervasive secularism, a world in which many people take for granted that 'God is dead'? One thing is sure : he's not very likely to win over the 'unbeliever'—or even the predisposed inquirer — with finely spun metaphysical sepculations intend to 'prove' the existence of God" [*New Theology No. 1*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York : Macmillan; London : Collier-Macmillan, 1967), p. 21].
34. Fred L. Standley, "Rabbit Run : An Image of life", *The Midwest Quarterly*, VIII (Summer 1967), p. 371.
35. Ed. L. Miller, *God and Reason* (New York : Macmillan, 1972), p. 12.
36. Karl Barth sounds a warning against this approach: "[The church] turns away from all ideas and plans for man's self-realization, warning all men against any attempt to redeem themselves by their own efforts. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and the kingdom of man is never that of God" [*Fragments Grave and Gay*, ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London and Glasgow : Collins, 1971), p. 62].
37. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 45.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-12.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
40. In Albert Camus's novel The Stranger Mersault, the protagonist, is shown ignoring the advice of the churchman. When the prison chaplain visits him in the cell and offers him the consolations of the Church, he refuses to be comforted or feel remorse.
41. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 113.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
43. *Ibid.*, p.12.
44. In Franz Kafka's novel *The Trial* Joseph K. finds that the most powerful judges (God) are so remote that no one is sure that they even exist. He feels he is attempting to find grace at the hands of a God who remains forever hidden.
45. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 230.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
48. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections* ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans, G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 51.
49. This theme is depicted by Franz Kafka in his novel *The Castle* in which K. fails to reach the castle because he tries to achieve his mission without the help of the revealed theology. The Castle of this novel represents the divine order, K. is the fallible human being, Count Westwest is God the Father, and Klamm, whose features are not known and who is sometimes manifest in the flesh, is God the Son. The ways of the Castle (the workings of Providence) are a mystery to human intelligence. When K. tries to get the Castle on his own initiative, he is led astray.
50. Exodus, 20 : 3-17.
51. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 12.
52. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 47.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
54. The instinct sect is propagated by D.H. Lawrence, explaining it A.S. Collins points out: "The darkness to which [Lawrence] mystically appealed was the inner darkness of the unconscious, the well of instinctive life, in contact with the elemental things. To this he later added something of sun-worship.... So, largely expressed in his novels but very much in his letters too, he evolved a kind of modern pagan religion to free men from the sterility, from the monotonous boredom and mechanical slavery of the machine age. It was all a rebellion, religious in spirit against contemporary materialism. For Christianity in its organized form he had no use" [*English Literature of the Twentieth Century* (London : University Tutorial Press, 1965), pp. 207-08].

55. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 90.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
57. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 87.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
60. Exodus, 20: 3-5, 14.
61. The wholesome advice is given to him by the gasoline pump attendant : "The only way to get somewhere, you know, is to figure out where you're going before you go there'" [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 27]. But Harry pays no attention to it. The unwholesome advice which he accepts is given to him by Tothero who asks him to do what the heart commands [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 47].
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 9.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
64. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 165.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
69. Iwao Iwamoto, "The Vagrant Saint : A Study of John Updike's *Rabbit, Run*", *Studies in American Literature*, Tenth Anniversary Extra Number (Osaka, Japan : 1971), p. 57.
70. "Man wants to be like God, not only in the knowledge of good and evil, but in being his own maker. The point for such an idealist is, of course, not that man should live under law rather than be a maker, but that when he seeks to make himself into conformity to any image except the one destined for him he involves in self-destruction as well as the destruction of others" [M. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self* (New York : Harper and Row, 1963), p. 132].
71. Gerry Brenner, "John Updike's Criticism of the Return to Nature", *Twentieth Century Literature*, XII (April 1966), p. 3.
72. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 21.
73. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), pp. 8-9.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
75. "Desperate Weakling", *Time*, 7 November 1960, p. 108.
76. "One who disobeys, not knowing his Master's will, will not be punished so severely as one who knowingly disobeys" [W.T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament* (Nashville : Broadman Press, 1940), p. 121].
77. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 235.
78. *Ibid.*

79. Fred L. Standley, "*Rabbit, Run* : An Image of Life", *The Midwest Quarterly*, VIII (Summer 1967), p. 375.
80. Reinhold Niebuhr indicts the tendency towards heresy in the following words:
"Without the presuppositions of the Christian faith the individual is either nothing or becomes everything. In the Christian faith man's insignificance as a creature, involved in the process of nature and time, is lifted into insignificance by the mercy and power of God in which his life is sustained. But his significance as a free spirit is understood as subordinate to the freedom of God. His inclination to abuse his freedom, to overestimate his power and significance and to become everything is understood as the primal sin. It is because man is inevitably involved in this primal sin that he is bound to meet God first of all as a judge, who humbles his pride and brings his vain imagination to naught" [*The Nature and Destiny of Man : A Christian Interpretation*, Vol. I (London : Nisbet, 1949), p. 98].
81. "*Rabbit, Run* : John Updike's Criticism of the 'Return to Nature'", *Twentieth Century Literature*, XII (April 1966), p. 22.
82. It is evident from the following piece of conversation between Harry and Eccles:
"I Mean ... remember that thing we used to talk about? The thing behind everything." "Harry, you know, I don't think that thing exists in the way you think it does" [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1970), p. 234].
83. "A Little Good in Evil", *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 5 November 1960, p. 28.
84. "John Updike's fiction", *Critique*, V (Spring-Summer 1962), p. 35.
85. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 47.
86. "[The term instinctive behaviour] has been applied to behaviour driven from within..., to nonlearned behaviour ....and to unconscious or unpremditated behaviour" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 12 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 323].
87. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 228.
88. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), p. 140.
89. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), p. 43.
90. Reinhold Niebuhr defines 'piety' in the following way : "Genuine piety sets up an authority for the individual conscience which prevents the state or the community from becoming an idolatorous end of human existence. Religious faith makes a rigorous affirmation, 'We must obey God, rather than man', in opposition to all tyranny. But, unfortunately, piety develops its own idolatories by claiming a too simple alliance between the

divine will and human mind" [*Pious and Secular America* (New York : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 6].

91. William G. McLoughlin, "Pietism and the American Character", *The American Experience : Approaches to the Study of the United States* (1968 rpt; Hyderabad : American Studies Research Centre, 1972), p. 43.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
93. William G. McLoughlin, "Pietism and the American character", *The American Experience : Approaches to the Study of the United States* (1968 rpt; Hyderabad : American Studies Research Centre, 1972), p. 44.
94. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 15.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
97. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 431.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
99. "Prayer, to Emerson, is not man talking to God; it is man talking to himself, it is, as he says, a 'soliloquy'. And man is not only talking to himself, he is congratulating himself upon himself, and upon the general state of affairs. While admiration and praise are a legitimate and important part of a Christian's prayer, the admiration and praise are not properly directed to the one praying, but to God and His works. The Christian prayer recognizes the great gap which separates man from God; it is in fact based upon the very dualism which Emerson denies. The Christian prayer *does* often *beg*; it is a petition; 'beseech' is one of the most frequently recurring words in all prayers of the Christian Church. Christian prayer may, and often does, quite properly crave a particular commodity: 'Give us this day our daily bread', is an example. Most important of all, Christian prayer has as its very basis and starting point contrition for sin, the classic instance being that of the publican, who smot his breast, and cried 'God be merciful to me a sinner', and went down to his house justified" [Randall Stewart, *American Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1958), p. 56].
100. Ernst Troeltsch, the German historian of religion, "listed as the salient features of the pietistic temper, its anti-institutionalism, its voluntarism, its exaltation of the individual's direct relationship with God, its aspiration 'after personal inward perfection', its hostility to worldliness and the kind of compromise which the established church-type systems have to make with the state, and its doctrine of the priesthood of all believers" [William G. McLoughlin, "Pietism and the American

Character", *The American Experience : Approaches to the Study of the United States*, ed., Henning Cohen (1968, rpt; Hyderabad : American Studies Research Centre, 1972), p. 39].

101. This is evident from the following conversation between Piet and Angela:
"I adore you. I need you."
"Well then you need the wrong thing. I want out. I'm tired of being bullied" [*Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 434].
102. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 150.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 434.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
108. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 359.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 454.
110. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 158.
111. "Zen Buddhism is a school of thought within Buddhism. It originated in India in the sixth century and later spread to China and Japan. Adherents of Zen have been active in the United States since 1900 and, from time to time, have formed small, informal groups recruited largely among intellectuals in a few large cities.
"Followers of Zen practice highly disciplined meditation in order to attain enlightenment. This process is a mystical one; sometimes the disciple has a 'master' and may interrupt a long period of meditation to consult his mentor, who often uses paradoxes and surprises to bring him to awareness... There is no formulated creed, no organized litany, no formal congregation, all of which are regarded as useless for attaining enlightenment." [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States* (New York : Barnes and Noble, 1965), p. 76].
112. "*Yoga* is a way of living that is strictly followed by some Hindu groups but is not restricted to them. It is an attitude of mind, a point of view or conviction, founded upon the ideal of attaining union with god [*sic*] —the common aim of mystics in all religious bodies. It is a method of freeing the spirit of man thus giving him access to the great and creative powers of the universe. In practice the chief emphasis is often placed upon 'thought control' as a means of developing extraordinary power over the human physique. For a devout follower of the method, many years of exercise, meditation and devotion are required. These exercises, together with extremely simple personal habits and 'a single

heart' lead the soul into a state of illumination" [Benson Y. Landis, *Religion in the United States* p. 75].

113. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 159.
114. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 161.
116. *Ibid.*, p. 159.
117. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 23 (Chicago, London, Toronto *et al.*, William Benton, 1972), p. 596.
118. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 23 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 957.
119. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 159.
120. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 12, p. 119.
121. *Ibid.*
122. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

7

Yearning for the Christian Values

John Updike not only displays his awareness of the spiritual ill-health of humanity but also suggests a way to effect a cure. It makes his position different from that of any other contemporary writer who depicts the spiritual alienation and anguish of the modern man but "do[es] not know how to overcome the sickness from which [his protagonists] suffer."[1] Updike depicts characters who overcome the spiritual confusion from which many of his protagonists suffer. It is through them that Updike answers the questions of theology and embodies his yearning for spiritualism and revealed theology. A pronounced religious current runs through all his works, most of which are primarily concerned with the questions bout God, sin, redemption, salvation, soul, grace and immortality—the questions which form the very roots of the biblical thought. Through the discussion on these questions Updike suggests that it is man's return to God and faith in God's Word that can save the modern man and lead him to salvation. Consequently, the view of David D. Galloway that Updike offers "no solution" to the problem of salvation for the modern man[2] cannot be accepted. Updike is a Barthian who depicts in the body of his fiction a crisis theology or a theology of judgment and decision. He occupie

to use the words of Ed. L. Miller, the "classical protestant position of the reformers : *sola scriptura, sola fides, sola gratia*— 'Scripture alone, faith alone, grace alone."[3]

Updike's favour for the spiritual values and beliefs[4] of Christianity is evident from the facts that all his characters who attain God's grace, posit full faith in the Scriptures and the Christian values, and that the theology that finds projection in his novels is biblical.[5] In *The Poorhouse Fair* Updike presents a case for spiritualism in its strong polemical form. He presents the spiritual values of Christianity through Mendelssohn, the former prefect of the poorhouse. Mendelssohn and his ways are widely discussed and commented upon in the novel. The inmates wish him back and wait for his resurrection—a term that joins him with Christ who is believed to have risen on the third day of his crucifixion.[6]

Mendelssohn (he died before the beginning of the action of the novel) was a religious man who worried more about the questions of transcendence than those of immanence. Unlike Conner, he was indifferent to the questions of promotion or administrative reforms in the poorhouse. He took delight in singing Christian prayers and made the listeners also religious minded:

> As the songs grew more religious the rims of Mendelssohn's eyes grew redder, and he was dabbing at his cheeks with the huge handkerchief he always carried and was saying, in the splendid calm voice that carried to the farthest corner and to the dullest ear, how here they lived close to death, which cast a shadow over even their gaiety, and for him to hear them sing was an experience in which joy and grief were so mixed laughter and tears battled for control of his face; here they lived with Death at their sides, the third participate in every in every conversation, the other guest at every meal....[7]

Thus he remained preoccupied with the questions of, what Heinrich Straumann terms as, human "fate in the infinite."[8] His bias for the religious view is presented as an anti-thesis to Conner's secular approach to life. Moreover, he was not a

natural theologian and, unlike Hook, never tried to give cosmological or teleological proofs in order to convince people of God's existence. He expressed his faith in the revealed theology and all the inmates accepted his views. Consequently he had neither, unlike Hoo, to grope for light to deliver to anybody, nor, unlike Conner, to encounter any revolt. As a matter of fact the inmates of the poorhouse symbolize the human heart which is a battle-ground of transcendence and immanence or Christ and Satan who are represented here by Mendelssohn and Conner. Since it is Mendelssohn who wins the inmates' hearts, the novel is to be taken as an embodiment of Christ's victory over Satan. This further signifies the novelist's considering the Christian doctrine tenable.

Updike's faith in Christianity is further affirmed in *The Centaur*, a novel which this novelist is said to have called "in my memory my gayest and truest book."[9] George Caldwell, the protagonist of this novel, Updike's noblest creation and one of the rarest persons in the modern fiction, is again a religious minded man. He posits full faith in the Bible.[10] Though he is a science teacher and hence familiar with the revelations of the modern science, yet he believes that "God made Man as the last best thing in His Creation."[11] His words echo the words of the Old Testament[12] and exhibit his faith in God, the Creator. He also values the spiritual aspect of life and devotes his life to the spiritual quest. The epilogue of the novel suggests that he attains salvation[13]: "Zeus had loved his old friend, and lifted him up, and set him among the stars as the constellation Sagittarius. Here, in the Zodiac, now above, now below the horizon he assists in the regulation of our destinies, though in this latter time few mortals cast their eyes respectfully toward Heaven, and fewer still sit as students to the stars."[14]

It implies that Updike favours Caldwell's theology and ethics. Caldwell, as depicted in this novel does not rely on himself—his impulses, intellect or conscience—for spiritual guidance. He makes a quest and goes to Christianity (symbolized by Churchmen) for answers to his questions. His quest is marked with humility. Failures sometimes drive him to despair, as is suggested in the following passage : "There was no hope. There was not one of the twleve he had not consulted and not one had given him the answer. Must he wander for ever beneath

the blank gaze of the gods?"[15] But at last revelation comes to him and he learns : "Ignorance is bliss."[16] This lesson is based on God's forbidding Adam to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge.[17] And it comes to him as God's self-manifestation rather than as a light of the impulses. He accepts it on faith without ever worrying about any objective proofs in its favour. It is again an evidence of George's—and Updike's—faith in the revealed theology. It also signifies that George's approach is diametrically opposed to that of Harry Angstrom who is the champion of natural theology.[18] That is why it is not desirable to bracket George with Harry though David D. Galloway does it by regarding both these characters as "saints".[19] It is George alone who deserves to be called a saint. Harry Angstrom, far from being a saint, is a sinner.[20]

Updike's favour for the literal fundamental belief in Christianity also finds projection in his poem 'Seven Stanzas at Easter'. In this poem Updike rejects the attempts to rationalize the Christian message and beliefs and suggests that the attempts to interpret them in terms of reason are the attempts to mock God and His World:

> Make no mistake : if He rose at all
> It was as His body;
> if the cells's dissolution did not reverse, the molecules
> reknit, the amino acids rekindle, the Church will fall.
> .....
> Let us not mock God with metaphor, analogy,
> sidestepping, transcendence; making of the event a
> parable, a sign painted in the faded credulity of earlier
> ages : let us walk through the door.[21]

It signifies that according to Updike the Christian beliefs are to be accepted as they are and any effort to deviate from them is a road to atheism which "wears as many faces as Satan."[22]

The remark of Norris W. Yates is quite significant in this connection. He, maintaining that Updike shares skepticism with his characters, states:

> Being no optimist about this life and no dogmatist about
> the next, Updike has to be perpetually making the leap

> of faith. His attitude is similar to that of Miguel de Unamuno, who in *The Tragic Sense of Life* maintains that man's intuitive thirst for immortality demands a belief in God but that man's reason tells him there cannot be a God; out of this clash between reason and feeling come man's largest and noblest efforts, including genuine faith, which needs no validation other than itself. Hook had this kind of faith; so does Caldwell. So, evidently, does their author, and he also has their kind of doubt, a skepticism which stimulates faith as certain bodily functions stimulate antibodies in the blood stream. On the other hand, *Rabbit, Run* is the fullest expression of Updike's skepticism. Doubt born of anxiety finally overwhelms faith in Rabbit, and that the spark is not completely extinguished is ground only for pathos, not for spiritual hope.[23]

However, this view cannot be considered tenable and Updike cannot be accused of harbouring any kind of skepticism—mainly in view of the fact that he depicts George, his best character, as a man with firm faith in Christianity [see *infra*]. Even Hook, the leader of the opponents of the atheist, is depicted as a true Christian. He possesses, in the words of the narrator himself, "unrelenting faith",[24] prays to God "requesting that the spell be allowed to pass and that his children be restored to him in Heaven,"[25] and holds that the commandments, the transgression of which brings punishment with it, must be obeyed.[26] Even in his actions he behaves like a true Christian as he allows himself to be tortured by Conner and Biddy who snatch his cigar from him and consider him to be the man behind the stoning by the inmates; after being ill-treated by the administrator of the poorhouse, he not only forgives him but also takes upon himself the task of "groping after the fitful shadow of the advice he must impart to Conner, as a bond between them and a testament to endure his dying in the world."[27] His attitude reminds one of Christ's attitude who said : "Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy."[28] If Conner does not accept Hook's views, it does not mean that Hook is a skeptic or Updike is a skeptic. Nor does it signify Hook's swinging between doubt and faith. What it signifies is that theology cannot satisfy man's reason and it has to be accepted as faith.[29]

Nor can George Caldwell be called a skeptic. In fact, it is through him that Updike expresses his religious beliefs. George is a theist who posits full faith in the Christian theology. His God never rests from watching him.[30] His son also feels that they live "in God's sight".[31] The prayer song that he sings is again significant in this respect : "The great Jehovah wisely planned / All things of Earth divinely grand / And in his way, all nature tends / To laws divine, to serve his ends."[32] It suggests that for George God is not only the creator but also the controller of the universe, that nature too obeys His laws, and that it exists only to serve His ends.

George's God is "very fine, very elegant, very slender, and very exquisite."[33] He takes care of man and saves him from sin. This view finds projection in the following speech of George : "I don't know where the hell we'd be without him."[34] It also implies that his God is merciful and not cruel, and that He is not eager to punish a poor erring human being. But it does not imply that man should depend entirely on God's mercy and should allow himself to succumb to any sin he likes. George's statement that God "takes care of you if you let Him"[35] signifies that a human being also has to do something for his salvation, and that if he makes no efforts in this direction God will not take care of him. The novelist too indicates his approval of this view because the tale of George illustrates it : George is able to attain salvation by leading a spotless life and thus by making his own efforts rather than by merely waiting for the gentle rain of His mercy.

George's comment on the Calvinistic concept of the 'elect' and the 'non-elect' indicates that he wishes to believe in a just God who should reward or punish people on merit rather than on the basis of pre-destination. George goes to a churchman and asks him : "What I could never ram through my thick skull was why the ones that don't have it were created in the first place. The only reason I could figure out was that God had to have somebody to fry down in Hell."[36] He cannot believe that some persons are God's favourites while others are not and that the deeds of people cannot make any change in this phenomenon. If the "elect" are sure to attain salvation and the "non-elect" are never going to get God's grace, God is not just.[37] And Caldwell does not like to accept that God can condemn any one without a just cause.

The gods and goddesses, as portrayed by Vera in *The Centaur* are lecherous and possess no divinity. For example, Zeus, the lord of the sky, is described by her, as a "lecherous muddler";[38] Poseidon, the master of the sea is "a senile old deckhand" with his chest "fell of African pornography";[39] Vera's husband visits the created race of mankind only "to accomplish a rape";[40] and Venus herself is a born whore.[41] By making Vera do this Updike indicates his belief in one God rather than many—a view that Karl Barth embodies in the following words : "The decision is reached that this God, who chooses them, is God alone and that all other so-called or would-be gods are not what they claim to be. He alone is God, because all that he is and does has its significance and power and stands or falls by the fact that He is it and does it in an incomparable and unique way. There is no other like him."[42]

In his short story "Dentistry and Doubt" published in *The Same Door* Updike again posits his belief in God's existence through Burton. This young "American" who is making an effort to be useful and devout finds himself to be a victim of doubt and confusion. While he sits in the dentist's chair, he is a captive of scientific knowledge. There he contemplates the questions of pride and pain, the place of the Devil in the cosmos, God's reasons for allowing the contemptuously slow process of evolution, and the immeasurable distances of time and space. But at the conclusion of the story he reassures himself with the idea that man is confused but God is not "I grant we are apt, prone, and ready, to forsake God : but is God as ready to forsake God? Our minds are changeable : is His so likewise?"[43]

The Christian God appears in the novels of Updike quite frequently and performs various actions. In *The Centaur* He appears as Zeus. Here He warns the true Christians from yielding to temptation and also rewards them.[44] This is evident from the following incidents : first, Zeus warns George, who while returning as chiron from Hummel's garage (Hephaestus' forge) after getting the arrow removed, encounters Vera's (Venus') seductive advances, in the form of thunder against submitting to adultery,[45] secondly Zeus rewards Chiron by lifting him up and setting him among the stars as a constellation [see *supra*].

Robert Deitweiler is of the view that in *The Centaur* the traditional God has not been taken seriously.[46] To quote him :

"As Zeus-Zimmermann, he has his lusts and affairs that are merely overlooked because he has power; but they are not condoned. As the Protestant deity, he is dismissed with the spinster French teacher's banal '*Dieu est très fin*', to which George Caldwell absently responds, "He's wonderful old gentleman. I don't know where the hell we'd be without Him."[47] However, the way in which He is depicted in the novel does not substantiate it. If God had not been taken seriously, George, the true Christian would not have been shown to be a recipient of God's grace. The fact remains that by making God reward this faithful Christian Updike expresses his faith in the Christian God who is pleased with those who have faith in His word.

John Updike suggests his belief in the theory that God is beyond human prayer.[48] Several of his characters pray to God several times but fail to get what they wish. In *Rabbit, Run* Harry blames God for his daughter's death and for not opening the cork to let the water go out [see *supra*]. Likewise he wishes his dead daughter to come back to life. But no such miracle occurs. In *Rabbit Redux* too he often prays for he safety of his parents, wife and son [see *supra*]. But none of these prayers is answered.

Updike's God is not, what Karl Barth terms as, "the vacuum of utter abstraction,"[49] or one who "neither has a specific word, nor exercises a specific power and authority.[50] He is present in the world. The presence of Updike's God in the world is like the presence of Karl Barth's God. Karl Barth explains it in the following way:

> [God's glory] derives from the presence of the Creator which is granted to the creature. This is to idle or unfruitful presence. It is not the presence of a cold confrontation. It is not a presence which leaves blind eyes blind or deaf ears deaf. It is a presence which opens them. It is a presence which also losses at once tongues that were bound. God's glory is the indwelling joy of His divine being which as such shines out from Him, which overflows in its richness, which in its super-abundance is not satisfied with itself but communicates itself.[51]

Updike's God is present in Updike's world to reward his chirons, prevent them from sins[52] and open the eyes of Piets by making them aware of their sinful lives.

In *Couples* God is an omnipresent overseeing power.[53] Here He is present in the form of the gilded weather-vane on the pinnacle of the congregational church. This weathercock-God is visible from every part of Tarbox and can watch the activities of the people. He watches people, including Piet, going to the church and makes the adulterers, like Piet, feel guilty.[54] But there is one Ultimate God above this symbolic God.[55] This Ultimate God watches the affairs of Tarbox for the sake of judgment. The adulterous behaviour of the couples incites His wrath and He punishes the whole community by striking and burning the Congregational church with His lightning.[56] This behaviour of Updike's God exprsses the novelist's belief in the Old Testament God who burnt Sodom and Gommorah for the vices to which the residents of these places had given themselves.[57] Here Updike has brought Milton's God.[58] back and has restored to Him His dreaded weapon of thunder and lightning.

In *Couples* again, God reveals Himself and sends His Word to Piet in the form of a soaked pamphlet which proclaims Christ's divinity[59] and the need of sacrifice for the sinners : "It is the indispensable duty of all the nations of the earth to know that the LORD he is God, and to offer unto him sincere and devout thanksgiving and praise."[60] This is the light of God's Word that is revealed to Piet. It is God who has reached Piet rather than otherwise.

Updike has expressed his faith in God, the Creator61 and not the one "worshipped within this rich white church." In an interview he told Charles Thomas Samuels:

> I guess the noun "God" reappears in two totally different senses, the god in the first instance being the god worshipped within this nice white church, the more or less watered down Puritan god; and then god in the second sense means ultimate power. I've never really understood theologies which would absolve God of earthquakes and typhoons, of children starving. A god who is not the Creator is not very real to me, so that,

time, paradoxically, immediately present and available.[68] He wills people to keep away from sin and accept His self-revelation. He also wishes His will to be done and to frustrate Satan's plan to lead man away from Him. Thus Updike's God is not a merely a mind and does not merely form a previously given formless stuff. He is also vitality and form and the source of all existence.

Nature, as depicted by Updike, is an instrument which God uses to reward the righteous and punish the sinners. In *Couples* God burns the Congregational church with His weapon of thunder and lightning. In *The Centaur* too Chiron is warned against the temptations of sin by the thunder of Zeus [see *supra*]. In this respect Updike's view is different from that of the romantics who, for example Wordsworth, identified nature with God.[69] Updike does not identify nature with God since nature is only God's creation; and creation cannot be identified with the creator.

Updike also expresses his faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ.[70] This is indicated in *Couples* where Piet gets a soaked pamphlet which the supernatural storm sends him.[71] This pamphlet bears the remark that Jesus is God.[72] This is a form of revealed theology which Piet is asked to know and accept. The view which challenges Christ's divinity is depicted as Satan's voice in the short story "Pigeon Feathers" in which the Devil comes to David in the pages of H.G. Wells's *The Outline of History* and the boy "travels through the doubt and despair that had afflicted the Victorians a century earlier."[73] These pages of Wells shatter David's belief in the divinity of Christ soon afterwards while seated on the outhouse seat at night he has the horrifying vision of death and infinity of the universe. He regains faith and belief in immortality several months after it when he kills pigeons and personally participates in death.

Updike indicates his belief in the immortality of soul. In *The Poorhouse Fair* it is Elizabeth who ignores the scientific facts and believes that the human body is like "a house with a few windows"; so long as we are alive we remain confined to it but our death takes us into the open air.[74] She believes that when the souls are in heaven they make themselves known to one another like "drops of water touching our arms."[75] It implies that, according to her, the soul does not die with the body and

continues to exist endlessly. But the novelist is silent on the question of rebirth and the transmigration of the soul. Mrs. Angstrom, Harry's mother, however, believes that prayer can bring rebirth to a person. This is evident from her asking Harry to "pray for rebirth."[76] Death figures as a theme in several of his short stories. For instance, in "Pigeon Feathers" young David finds hope and solace for immortality while killing the pigeons. The beauty of the birds leads him to think of God, His creation, and the immortality of the soul. He extends the evidence of design in nature to the universal design of divinity. He arrives at the conclusion that God, in allowing death, is not permitting a catastrophic absurdity but a consummation that is essential for the universe. Thus the horror of infinity brings to David a trust in its intelligent perfection.[77]

The way Harry Angstrom regains spiritual health in *Rabbit Redux* is an illustration of Updike's faith in the Christian doctrine of repentence. At the beginning of the novel Harry is an impulsive person. But towards the end when he gets rid of Jill and Skeeter, he is a changed man. Jill's death symbolizes the end of his sinful ways and Skeeter's departure after spitting in the centre of his palm[78] symbolizes the Devil's failure to lead him to damnation. Likwise, the burning of Harry's house symbolizes the burning of his personal theology. Harry's behaviour too exhibits a marked change after it. His spiritual pride is replaced by self-decision and the loss of ego. He goes to the extent of calling himself a "nobody".[79] He repents on what he did in his pest and regains faith in the Christian theology and accepts the Christian attitude of his father : "...the Lord must have His reasons."[80] When his faith in the Christian God is revived, Janice also realizes her fault and comes back to him. The repentence[81] and redemption of Harry are embodied in the following conversation:

"I feel so guilty."

"About what?"

"About everything."

"Relax. Not everything is your fault."

"I cannot accept that."[82]

How faith in the revealed theology brings spiritual happiness to a person is illustrated in *The Poorhouse Fair* through Elizabeth Heinemann. She is a blind woman but she exhibits the faith and trust of an innocent child—an unfallen Eve. She finds the

corridor walls speaking to her and giving her consolation. They, she believes, tell her: "Don't be afraid Elizabeth; I'm here...."[83] She defines heaven in the following way : ".... Heaven will be... a mist of all the joy sensations have given us. Perfumes, and children speaking, and cloth on our skin; hungers satisfied as soon as we have them."[84] This is an illustration of the Christian Blessed Hope[85] which her simple faith has given her. She accepts the biblical concepts on faith without questioning them at all and, consequently, saves herself from any ensnarement, guilt and sin.

Updike objectives his support of the revealed theology in *Rabbit, Run* also. The church building, which is an emblem of the revealed theology, is depicted here as a cloud that showers spiritual happiness on those who believe in God's Word. This is shown in case of Harry Angstrom. When Harry, after being persuaded by Eccles, goes to church, he experiences a spiritual elevation : "By the time he enters the church he is too elevated with happiness to ask forgiveness. As he kneels in the pew....his head buzzes with joy, his blood leaps in his skull and the few words he frames....bob inconsecutively among senseless eddies of gladness.[86] But this happiness is short-lived because Harry soon turns to the light of his natural theology and starts finding fault with the church worship.[87]

Updike's acceptance of religious sacrifice finds projection in *The Centaur, Rabbit, Run* and his short story "Giving Blood". In *The Centaur,* it is George Caldwell himself who exemplifies the Christian self-sacrifice and gives his life to help others.[88] That is why his prototype is Christ[89] rather than Chiron. He is a selfless person and Peter, his son, is not the only beneficiary of his selfless sacrifice. Caldwell's concern reaches beyond his son and embraces the whole of humanity. It includes the entire student body of Olinger High School and especially the students like Deifendorf who mock him. Even a drunken vagabond who charges him of homosexuality, is not beyond his charity and gets twenty five cents from him. While on his way to school he drives six miles out of his way in order to help a dirty hitch-hiker who rewards him by stealing the gloves which Peter had been able to buy for Christmas after saving money for several months. He is also free from vanity.[90] As a matter of fact all the characteristics of a true Christian, as enumerated by L.T.

Hobhouse, are found in him : " [A true Christian] must not even vindicate his rights; if a man takes his cloak, he must let that man have his coat also, for the meek shall inherit the earth. He must assert not himself but Christianity.[91]

"Christendom", in the words of L.T. Hobhouse, "is remarkable for the universality of its philanthropy, for the great variety of its efforts which have organized distinct forms of relief for so many different kinds of suffering and for the exceptional self-sacrifice of doctors, nurses and ministers of religion."[92] All these Christian values are objectified through George Caldwell. He stands for duty, sacrifice and do-goodness. He sacrifices his life for Peter like Chiron, the centaur who sacrificed his immortal life for Prometheus. It is this sacrifice that makes him resemble Chiron.

Norman Podhoretz opines that George Caldwell's sacrifice, if it can be called a sacrifice at all, is quite useless and that Caldwell's death cannot help Peter in any way at all.93 But George sacrifices himself not by dying or by leaving his immortality because he has none. He sacrifices himself to the cause of humanity, symbolized by Peter, by going back to work.

The death of Rebecca June angstrom in *Rabbit, Run* again has a sacrificial motif. It is a Biblical allusion to the sacrificial lamb.[94] This sacrifice brings only half reconciliation because Janice fails to meet her moral responsibilities. She has drifted with the low ebb of life in place of rising above it to higher level. Eccles rightly says : "We must work for forgiveness; we must *earn* the right to see that thing behind everything."[95]

In his story "Giving Blood" collected in *The Music School* the process of donating blood is described in terms of the Christian sacrifices.[96] The estranged husband and wife regain the organic quality of their marriage and spiritual union as a result of this sacrifice. The marriage that had reached a point of break-up is restrengthened and both the partners agree to inflict condemnation on themselves.

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1. Charles I. Galicksberg, "The Religious Revival in Contemporary Literature", *Western Humanities Review*, XI (Winter 1957), p. 65.

2. *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 21.
3. *God and Reason* (New York : Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 207.
4. Stressing the need for the recovery of faith Dr. S. Radhakrishnan points out:
   "Human societies like human beings live by faith and die when faith disappears. If our society is to recover its health, it must regain its faith. Our society is not sick beyond saving for it suffers from divided loyalties, from conflicting urges, from alternating moods of exaltation and despair. This condition of anguish is our reason of hope. We need a faith which will assert the power of spirit over things and find significance in a world in which science and organization seem to have lost their relationship to traditional values" [*Recovery of Faith* (Delhi : Hind, n.d.), p. 14].
5. "Christian faith is both a conviction about God and a trust in the ways of God. It rests upon divine revelation as a disclosure of these ways in the history of Israel and of the church, but especially in Jesus Christ. With Judaism Christianity confesses that God is one and that he is the Creator of all. God is present and active in his creation but is neither identical with it nor captive within it. As the crown of God's creation, man has been endowed with a special mark of God's presence and activity, 'the image of God', which reflects the mind of the Maker" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), p. 698].
6. St. Luke, 24 : 7.
7. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 72.
8. *American Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York and Evanston : Harper and Row, 1965), p. 71.
9. Charles T. Samuels, "The Art of Fiction : John Updike XLIII", *Paris Review*, XII (Winter 1968), p. 103.
10. "Inasmuch as salvation is attainable only through the mediation and atonement of Christ, and since this is made applicable to individual sin in the measure of obedience to the laws of righteousness, faith in Jesus Christ is indispensable to salvation. But no one can effectively believe in Jesus Christ and at the same time doubt the existence of either the Father or the Holy Ghost; therefore faith in the entire Godhead is essential to salvation" [James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith* (Utah : The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day [*sic*] Saints, 1960), p. 106].
11. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 60.
12. Genesis, 1 : 27.

13. The theme of salvation has also been treated in Updike's short story 'Lifeguard' which is a parable of salvation and the writer treats it in terms of swimming. The narrator who is a divinity school student in the winter and a life-guard in the summer ponders over his role in life. He searches the meanings in the sea and in life through the Christian sources as well as through a direct observation of humanity. But he remains simply a searcher because he is unconvinced with the Christian theological explanations.
14. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 270.
15. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 266.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 178, 179, 180, 203, 224.
17. Genesis, 2 : 16-17.
18. See Chapter VI.
19. *The Absurd Hero in American Fiction* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 1966), pp. 34-35.
20. See Chapter VI.
21. *Seventy Poems* (Harmodsworth : Penguin, 1972), p. 28.
22. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 92.
23. "The Doubt and Faith of John Updike", *College English*, XXVI (March 1965), p. 474.
24. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 37.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
27. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 159.
28. St. Matthew, 5 : 7.
29. This view is embodied in the following words of Karl Barth: "All theology is *theologia viatorum*. It can never satisfy the natural aspiration of human thought and utterance for completeness and compactness. It does not exhibit its object but can only indicate it, and in so doing it owes its truth to the self-witness of the theme and not to its own resources" [*Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 82.].
30. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 31.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
32. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 177.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
36. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 228.
37. "Three things may be said in the consideration of the righteousness and justice of God : first there is the imposing of

righteousness, laws and demands, which may be called legislative holiness, and may be known as the righteousness of God; second, there is the executing of penalties attached to those laws, which may be called judicial holiness; third, there is the sense in which the attributes of the righteousness and justice of God may be regarded as the actual carrying out of the holy nature of God in the government of the world. So that in the righteousness of God we have His love of holiness, and in the justice of God, His hatred of sin" [William Evans, *The Great Doctrines of the Bible* (Chicago : Moody Press, 1964, p. 41].

38. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 26.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 37.
43. *The Same Door* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1971), p. 44.
44. "The monotheism of the Old Testament is sometimes spoken of as ethical monotheism. This is a true designation because the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and the Prophets, puts the emphasis on the ethical qualities in God. But this is still more true of the teaching of Jesus.... He emphasized the goodness of God—his mercy, loving kindness *[sic]*, and righteousness. He believed in the absoluteness over into the moral sphere. He said that only one is good, that is, God (Mk. 10 : 18). By this he meant that only one is good in the absolute and underived sense. God is absolute in his *[sic]* goodness. He said that God is perfect (Mt. 5 : 48). He constantly dwells on the goodness of God. He believed in the perfect moral goodness of the one God. God was good in all 'natural' attributes; but Jesus believed that the important thing for us is that he was supremely good" [W. T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament* (Nashville : Broadman Press, 1940), p. 95].
45. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 31.
46. *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 93.
47. *Ibid.*
48. It is based on Barth's view which Updike explains in his article "Faith in Search of Understanding" in the following way: "The liberal churches, as Barth saw them, were dedicated to 'the god to whom in our despair we have erected the tower of Babel; to the great personal or impersonal, mystical, philosophical, or naive Background and patron Saint of our human righteousness, morality, state, civilization, or religion..... This

god is really an unrighteous God, and it is high time for us to declare ourselves thoroughgoing doubters, skeptics, scoffers, and atheists in regard to him.' The real God, the God men do not invent, is *totaliter aliter* — Wholly Other. We cannot reach Him; only He can reach us. This He has done as the Christ of Biblical revelation, and the Yes of Barth's theology is the reaffirmation, sometimes in radically original terms (for instance, his virtually antinomian doctrine of all-inclusive Grace) of the traditional Christian message" [*Assorted Prose* (New York : Alfred & Knopf, 1965), pp. 273-74].

49. *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 29.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 162.
52. "The God that we find in the life and teachings of Jesus is a Father; but he is a righteous Father. His chief concern for us is not that we should be happy, but that we should be holy. And if we will *[sic]* not be holy, he loves us too well to let us be happy" [W.T. Conner, *The Faith of the New Testament*(Nashville: Broadman Press, 1940), p. 103].
53. Thomas Hardy, the English novelist, did not believe in the Christian God. Discussing it H.C. Duffin observes : "The use of the word 'God' by anyone but a Theist *[sic]* is dangerous, and invariably leads to misunderstanding. It led in Hardy's case to Mr. Alfred Noyes' charging him with having presented God as an imbecile jester. Hardy replied that this was absurd, because the cause of things... was unmoral, above love and hate, knowing neither good nor evil.... And indeed behind all Hardy's thought on the question of the Great Original one feels the presence of something vaster than nature, more impersonal than 'God'" [*Thomas Hardy : A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems and the Dynasts* (1916; rpt. Bombay : Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 341].
54. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), pp. 21-22.
55. Updike has taken this theory of two Gods from Paul Tillich who explains his view of God in the following words :
"But the word 'God' involves a double meaning : it connotes the unconditioned transcendent, the ultimate, and also an object somehow endowed with qualities and actions. The first is not figurative or symbolic, but is rather in the strictest sense what is said to be. The second, however, is really symbolic, figurative. It is the second that is the object envisaged by the religious consciousness. The idea of a Supreme Being possessing certain

definite qualities is present in the consciousness. But the religious consciousness is also aware of the fact that when the word God is heard, this idea is figurative, that it does not signify an object, that is it must be transcendent" [The Religious Symbol, *Symbolism in Religion and Literature*, ed. Rollo May (New York : George Braziller, 1966), p. 90].

56. See Chapter IV.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Paradise Lost*, 1 : 44-49.
59. 1 "... God is one in his *[sic]* 'essence' and three in his 'persons', Father, Son and Holy Spirit... But the eternal Son of God, who was truly God, became, just as truly man by being born of the Virgin Mary—this is the second classic confession of Christian orthodoxy. The life of Jesus Christ on earth was human life as God had intended human life to be. But more, it was part of the plan by which God wanted to restore his *[sic]* grace to men and to break the power of death.... His death on the cross satisfied the law and righteousness of God, took away the power of death, and opened to man the possibility of living by the grace of God in the Kingdom of God. And his resurrection from death marked the end to the power of sin and death, the beginning of a newness of life" [*Encyclopaedia Britannica* Vol. 5 (Chicago : Benton, 1972), pp. 698-99].
60. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 464.
61. In several of his short stories and poems also God is called the Creator. For example in "Pigeon Feathers" David regains faith in God who lavished his craft on the pigeons which he calls worthless birds [*Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*(Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 103]. A similar thing is said in the following lines of the poem "Sea Gulls" : "And even the feather-markings,/ Whose intricate symmetry is the usual glory of birds,/are in the gull slovenly,/as if God makes too many/ to make them very well" [*Seventy Poems* (Penguin, 1972), p. 9].
62. C. T. Samuels, "John Updike : The Art of Fiction XLIII", *Paris Review*, XII, p. 101.
63. Barth explains this view in the following way:
"... this world is not God himself, as pantheistic confusion again and again wishes to assert. It is not that we are God; but it can never be anything but our disastrous error that 'we should like to be as God'. It is therefore not, as ancient and modern gnosis claims, that what the Bible calls the Son is fundamentally the created world, or that the world is by nature God's child. Nor is it that the world is to be understood as an outflow, an

emanation from God, as something divine which wells out of God like a stream out of a spring. That would really not be creation, but a living movement of God, an expression of himself. But creation means something different; it means a reality distinct from God. And finally, the world must not be understood as a manifestation of God, so that God would be to some extent the Idea. God who alone is real and essential and fire, is one; and heaven and earth, man and the universe are something else, and this something else is not God, though it exists through God" [Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outlines*, trans, G.T. Thomson (London : S.C.M. Press, 1966), pp. 54-55].

64. Genesis, 3 : 1-5.
65. See Chapter IV.
66. Barth points out : "It is the God who wills to be known and worshipped and reverenced as such. It is the God who created His people Israel by His word, and separated them from all other peoples, and later separated the Church from Israel. It is the God who exercises His rule in what He wills and does with His people, the people first called Israel and later the church. It is He, this God, who as the Lord and Shepherd of that people is also, of course, the World ruler, the Creator of all things, the controller of all events, both great and small" [*Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 31].
67. Karl Barth, *Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 30.
68. According to Karl Barth, "He unveils Himself as the One He is by veiling Himself in a form which He Himself is not. He uses its work and sign, in order to be objective in, with and under this form, and therefore, to give Himself to us to be known. Revelation means the giving of signs. We can say quite simply that revelation means sacrament, i.e., the self-witness of God, the representation of His truth, and thereof the truth in which he knows himself, in the form of creaturely objectively and therefore in a form which is adapted to our creaturely knowledge" [*Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*,ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 407].
69. Randall Stewart, *American Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Baton Rouge : Louisiana State University Press, 1958), p. 45.
70. "There is only *one* Lord—Jesus Christ. Through him, God created us and all creatures. In his death and resurrection, God has reconciled the world to himself and made him to be Lord of

our lords.... We wait patiently for the perfecting of his kingdom in glory, and know that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" [*Karl Barth, Fragments Grave and Gay*,ed. Martin Rumscheidt, trans. Eric Mosbacher (London and Glasgow : Collins, 1971), p. 54].

71. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 464.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Robert Detweiler, *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 64.
74. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), pp. 87-88.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
76. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 198.
77. *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth : Penguin 1970), p. 103.
78. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 336.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
80. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 366.
81. "God has promised forgiveness unto those who truly repent; it is unto such that the advantages of individual salvation, through the atonement of Christ are extended.... Repentence is a means of pardon and is therefore one of God's great gifts to man. It is not to be had for the careless asking; it may not be found upon the highway; nevertheless it is given with boundless liberality unto those who have brought forth works that warrant its bestowal. That is to say, all who prepare themselves repentence will be led by the humbling and softening influence of the Holy Spirit to the actual possession of this great gift" [James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*(Utah : The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day *[sic]* Saints, 1960, 1960), pp. 113-14].
82. *Rabbit Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 406.
83. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 87.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
85. Karl Barth explains the Blessed Hope in the following way: "Creation is one long preparation, and therefore the being and existence of the creature are long readiness, for what God will intend and do with it in the history of covenant. Its nature is simply its equipment for grace. Its creatureliness is His grace, in the execution of the will of His eternal love, and finally and supremely in the consummation of the giving of his son, God plans for man and will not delay to accomplish for his benefit" [*Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics : Selections*, ed. Helmut Gollwitzer, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh : Clark, 1961), p. 150].

86. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 196.
87. See Chapter VI.
88. This noble character closely resembles Goethe's Faust. George, since he transcends this world by a combination of spiritual starving and the experience of divine grace, achieves salvation for the same reasons as Faust and the words of the angels carrying Faust's immortal soul to heaven might equally be said of Chiron:

> The Noble Spirit now is free
> And saved from evil scheme:
> Whoe'er aspires unweariedly
> Is not beyond redeeming.
> And if he feels the grace of Love
> That from On High is given,
> The Blessed Hosts that wait above
> Shall welcome him to Heaven.

[*Faust : A Tragedy*, trans. Bayard Taylor, ed. Victor Lange (New York : The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 252-53].

89. Jakob Wassermann portrays a Christ-figure in his novel *The World's Illusion* by presenting Christian Wahnschaffe who surrenders most of his income, sells his castle and leads the life of a saintly and ascetic Christian.
90. T.S. Eliot projects his favour for renunciation and humility in *Ash-Wednesday*. Explaining it A.S. Collins observes: "*Ash-Wednesday* of 1930 records in six movements a spiritual experience, beginning with renunciation and ending with the hope of life renewed. First he must rest in quiet and humility, forgetting self, with its introspection and self-analysis; then, even in the Waste Land *[sic]* there shall be joy again; but still the self dogs him, his senses distract him, and he realises only his unworthiness; and yet the time can be redeemed, and 'the new years walk'; but in these days of darkness the voice of God is hard for men to hear, and those who hear it with fear yet cannot surrender themselves; finally, however, he can rest in quiet with a new assurance, which he conveys with a poignant beauty of imagery drawn from nature and of a ship with white sails flying seaward" [*English Literature of the Twentieth Century* (London : University Tutorial Press, 1965), pp. 72-73).
91. *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* editor-in-chief Edwin R.A. Seligman, Vol. 3 (New York : Macmillan, 1954), p. 452).
92. *Ibid.*, p. 453.
93. *Doings and Undoings* (New York : The Noonday Press, 1964), p. 256.
94. Exodus, 29 : 15-18.
95. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich · Fawcett, 1970), p. 234.

96. Updike stressed the need of religious sacrifice even in an interview. He is reported to have said:
"The trauma or message that I acquired in Olinger had to do with suppressed pain, with the amount of sacrifice I suppose that middle-class life demands, and by that I guess I mean civilized life. The father, whatever his name, is sacrificing freedom of motion, and the mother is sacrificing in a way—oh, sexual richness, I guess, they're all stuck, and when I think back over these stories (and you know, they are dear to me and if I had to give anybody one book of me it would be the Vintage *Olinger Stories*). I think especially of that moment in 'Flight' when the boy, chafing to escape, fresh from his encounter with Molly Bingaman and a bit more of a man but not enough quite, finds the mother lying buried in her own peculiar messages from far away, the New Orleans jazz, and then the grand father's voice comes tumbling down the stairs singing "There is a happy land far far away" [Charles T. Samuels, "The Art of Fiction, XLIII; John Updike", *Paris Review*, XII (Winter 1968), p. 93].

8

From Vision to Technique

John Updike is first an artist and then a theologian. Like an artist, he gives his spiritual vision a form that appeals primarily to the aesthetic imagination and then to the sense of spiritualism. An artist is a preacher only secondarily, though he often does preach. Moreover, the preaching of an artist is different from that of an ordinary preacher. The literary artist, instead of preaching in a straightforward way, gives his vision—spiritual or material—an "objective correlative"[1] so that it appeals to the reader's moral sense through his aesthetic sense,[2] rather than otherwise. And for it he chooses a technique characteristically his own. Technique, as Mark Schorer points out, "is the means by which the writer's experience which is his subject matter, compels him to attend to it; [it] is the only means he has of discovering, exploring, developing his subject, of conveying its meaning, and finally of evaluating it."[3] It is not a secondary thing, some external machination, a mechanical affair, but a deep and primary operation. It not only contains intellectual and moral implications, but also discovers them.[4] It alone objectifies the materials of art. That is why there is the need of studying a writer's technique in study of his views and metaphysics. It is particularly necessary in case of a study of John Updike's spiritual vision for two reasons : first, his fictional technique is different from the techniques of most of the

contemporary novelists and secondly, there is a wide divergence in its critical evaluations [see *infra*].

Updike's novels do not tell stories and the concepts of exposition, climax and denouement do not apply to his plots.[5] But he does not appear as an experimentalist in his novels and, unlike John Barth and John Hawkes, he does not experiment for experiment's sake. He uses several contemporary techniques in order to dramatize the eternal problems. The most remarkable aspects of Updike's techniques are mythical parallelism, imagery, allegory and symbolism, satire, lyrical and figurative prose and narrative form of story-telling. It is through these that the novelist conveys his spiritual vision. The use of all these devices exhibits that Updike's technique is controlled from within by the pressure of the content of his novels and that it is an integral part of his vision.

With the fictional technique Updike employs he makes his vision so implicit in his novels that often critics are misled to believe that they have no philosophical "framework from which the reader is meant to derive their meaning"[6] or that whatever truths they are masking are not "worth uncovering".[7] Alfred Chester goes to the extent of assuring the reader that "nothing is being said" in Updike's fiction.[8] As a matter of fact it is an evidence of Updike's triumph that his books, as he wished them to be.[9] remain secrets and evade the critics' grasps. It also possesses what Eliot considers to be the basic requirement of good literature,[10] for if a literary artist endeavours merely to translate his religious intuitions in his works, his art is bound to suffer.

One of Updike's favourite devices that captivates the reader's attention is the use of myth. Myth is "a piece of fiction, usually inherited from the childhood of the race."[11] It brings with it "experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure of the brain, *a priori* determinants of individual experience."[12] This device has been popularised in the modern age by Thomas Mann, James Joyce and T.S. Eliot. Updike employs it in all his novels but *Rabbit Redux* in one form or the other.

The mythical parallelism that is suggested in *The Poorhouse Fair* is that of St. Stephen who reappears in this novel as Conner, though this time he champions the cause of science and atheism

rather than that of faith[13] The biblical St. Stephen was "a man full of faith and of the Holy spirit"[14] and was stoned by the infidels. But here the situation is reversed. The St. Stephen of *The Poorhouse Fair* is an infidel and the people who stone him have faith in the Word of God. When the biblical St. Stephen was stoned, he prayed for the safety of his opponents saying : "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."[15] But Conner, in a similar situation, takes upon himself the task of forgiving the inmates, though at the same time, he takes revenge by letting his assistant snatch away Hook's cigar and trample upon it insultingly.[16] The reversal of the situation has a purpose behind it. The Bible condemns the action of St. Stephen's enemies but *The Poorhouse Fair* condemns Conner an approves of the stoning by the inmates.

It is the myth of the Holy Grail which is an archetype in *Rabbit, Run* and Gerry Brenner's view that there are no archetypal figures in this novel[17] cannot be accepted. Harry, the self-styled saint in this novel, is engaged in the quest of the non-existent Grail. Though Updike never mentions it as such, it is indicated by Harry's search for something he himself has no knowledge of. The Chapel perilous is represented by the church that Harry sees from Ruth's apartment. The Grail hunt images Harry's life very suitably. Only those who are pure at heart will be able to find the Grail. Harry depends, for theological guidance, on the light of his natural impulses rather than on the revealed theology.[18] By using this archetypal design the novelist suggests that natural theology is a kind of self-deceit which can lead one only to depravity and sin, rather than to God's grace. By showing Harry's failure in his quest of the Grail Updike suggests that he has given himself to sinful ways.

In *Of the Farm* the novelist employs the myth of earth as eternal female. Updike suggests it by identifying Peggy with the 'farm'. Joey connects the ploughing of the land with his making love to his wife and *vice versa*. This myth is also contained in the Eve archetype which is the focus of the Lutheran Minister's sermon. The pastor preaches that Eve's "very name means 'living.'"[19] The use of myth suggests that for Updike woman is to be treated as a living person rather than a mere object. As earth is valued for its fertility, woman's value is for her fertility and she is not merely an object of hedonistic lust.

The myth underlying *Couples* is that of Sodom and Gomorrah, the two biblical cities upon which God rained fire and brimstone.[20] In *Couples* too the church edifice is burnt to ashes by God's lightning. Piet has close resemblance with Lot, the man who fled away from Sodom with his two virgin daughters and left his wife behind as she turned into a pillar.[21] The dissimilarity that is perceptible between Piet and Lot is that the former, alongwith the other couples of Tarbox, succumbs to sin and is made a scapegoat but it was not so with Lot who always remained obedient to God.

Though Updike suggests mythological parallelism in several of his novels, it is only in *The Centaur* that he explicitly mentions the parallels. The novelist, at his wife's suggestion, has given a 'mythological index' at the end of the novel. Every character in the novel has his or her counterpart in mythology.[22] This device has been disparaged by various critics. According to Norman Podhoretz this device does not at all help the reader either in understanding George's character or illuminating his plight. He holds : "....all it does is to surround *The Centaur* with a fake aura of profundity while at the same time permitting Updike to plug up holes of motivation and to impose a spurious significance on characters and event which have failed to earn any significance in their own right."[23] Likewise, Arthur Mizener regards the use of myth in *The Centaur* as an unwise and artistically unrealized addition to the novel.[24]

These critics find fault with Updike's employment of myth mainly because they wish to study his technique before studying his vision. But a fictional technique always relates back to a novelist's metaphysics and a critic's task is to study the latter before the former.[25] If Updike's technique is evaluated after a study of the vision embodied in the novels one arrives at the conclusion that his use of myth is an integral part of his novels and not a superimposition. What Updike aims at in *The Centaur* is the embodiment of the Christ-like self-sacrifice. It is in order to make his view intelligible to his readers that he conveys it through the myth of Chiron and the story of a science teacher. He employs the method used by George Caldwell in his classroom teaching. His teacher, in order to make his matter intelligible to his students compresses the five billion year history of the universe into a span of three days and describes the world a

as a golf-ball.[26] Likewise, Updike makes a theological question a story of gods and goddesses—a story which appeals to the emotions rather than to the reason and which dates back to an age "when rational explanations were not generally called for."[27]

Updike also shows the relatedeness of myth to reality. For this purpose he gives Peter, the narrator, a transcendental imagination. Peter's mind is mythical and with it he can interfuse the real with the unconscious world of mythic dreams. This takes him to a deeply imaginative level where it is easy to shift from the literal to the figurative and from one tense to another.[28] It also gives the story a sense of timelessness and gives Peter a perception to see past not only as past but also as present and to transcend to logical and rational.

Moreover, the use of myth in a novel is "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[29] It enables the novelist to point to the ultimate ground of existence and its ultimate fulfilment. As Reinhold Niebuhr points out, "....myth alone is capable of picturing the world as a realm of coherence and meaning without defying the fact of coherence. Its world is coherent because all facts in it are related to some central source of meaning; but it is not rationally coherent because the myth is not under the abortive necessity of relating all things to each other in terms of immediate rational unity."[30] Then, macrocosm and microcosm become transposed in *The Centaur* on account of this very parallelism. The religious intuitions which George and Peter feel and which are deeply implicit in the novel [see *supra*] are objectified with its help. It is this parallelism that gives the novel its great vitality and profound meaning, makes unfathomable fathomable, unifies the past with the present and makes the novel, what is called, a total artistic experience. Though in this age of science and technology the primitive stories of mythology in which gods and devils, nymphs satyrs, and fairies and witches figure, are regarded as the opulent fruits of an infantile imagination, the problems of spiritualism cannot be comprehended unless they are stated in mythical or symbolic terms. Scientific descriptions always tend to become mechanistic interpretations. But the symbols of mythical terms make them easily intelligible. Reinhold

Niebuhr rightly points out: "...mythical terms are the most adequate symbols of reality because the reality which we experience constantly suggests a centre and source of reality, which not only transcends immediate experience, but also finally transcends the rational forms and categories by which we seek to apprehend and describe it."[31] As art is a symbolization of the universal in the particular, so is the myth. The close affinity between the two is evident from the fact that in both of them the analyses of the situations and objectivization of particular situations contain suggestions of the total human and spiritual situation.

The images which Updike employs in his novels again suit the thought he wishes to convey. For example, in *The Poorhouse Fair* the image of the 'house' is used very frequently. The secular society of this novel has provided the old persons with a poorhouse—a shelter against poverty. The society, represented by Conner wishes to be thanked for it[32] but the inmates regard it as a slaughterhouse.[33] Conner's love for secularism is also indicated by making him belong to a house which has low ceilings, onion-grey or egg-blue, and which is made still lower by fluorescent structures.[34] Likewise, the porch of this house gives him a sense of shelter.[35] The inmates' dislike for it is indicated by making Gregg regard it as a place full of wild beasts—bears and tigers as big as Conner's swollen head.[36] That is why the way its wall is broken makes the inmates happy but "will cost Conner a pretty penny."[37]

The most obvious image in *Rabbit, Run* is that of the rabbit. Harry looks like a rabbit[38] and his implicit qualities also resemble those of his namesake. He, like Rabbit, obeys his instincts and is mild in nature. He is also frightened, always ready for a flight, always poised to escape when any problem threatens him, and often on the run. Nervous agitation twitches him even when he is secure. He also shares a rabbit's reputation for reproduction and thinks of women in terms of sexual encounters.[39] This image suggests Harry's kinship with animalkind and the view that a heretic needs correction rather than sympathy.

The second image in this novel is that of the basketball game. Harry finds himself to be first rate as a basketball player. For him basket-ball is a model for existence than a mere game. He uses his success in this game as a measuring rod in all the

other affairs of his life. This image describes the whole action of the novel. That is why the novelist makes Harry push his way into a casuals teenagers' game. His losing himself in his past minor glory either while playing the game or while talking about it[40] is an evidence of his limited vision and blindness for future. He wishes to revise his past. In the basketball game, the ball was at his disposal. In life too he wants every person to be a ball at his command. In the game he had all avenues to express his ego. In the same way he wishes to express it in life. Likewise, he wishes to make theology his theology rather than accept the one revealed by God Himself.[41]

Since Rabbit is guided by nothing else but his own intuition, Updike chooses the image of human heart to describe the source of his drives. Even the epigraph, "The motions of Grace, the hardness of the heart, external circumstances"[42] signifies that Harry seeks God's grace through the heart despite the hardness of the heart and external circumstances. Heart has been referred to as the source of direction at several other places. Tothero remarks : "A boy who has had his heart enlarged by an inspiring coach...can never become, in the deepest sense, a failure in the greater game of life."[43] Rabbit's mother too considers her son to be nothing but soft heart : "All soft heart. I suppose that's why men rule the world. They're all heart."[44] Reverend Eccles tells his wife that he can accept her disbelief in God "as long as [her] heart remain[s] open for *grace*."[45]

Even the description of Rabbit's first night with Ruth is given with the help of this image. To Harry Ruth seems transparent and he feels he "sees her heart".[46] He finds the inner lump also resembling the human heart : "Having leaned closer he sees that under the watery skin are hundreds of clear white veins like the capillaries on a leaf, as if ice too were built up of living cells. And further inside, so ghostly it comes to him last, hangs a jagged cloud, the star of an explosion, whose centre is uncertain in refraction but whose arms fly from the core of pallor as straight as long eraser-marks diagonally into all planes of the cube....Fear probes him; the cold lump is alive."[47]

Another image used in this novel is that of the circle which is related to and yet distinct from the image of the heart. The circle represents the state of perfection towards which, Harry thinks, he is moving. Harry harps on his having been first-rate

in basketball and in his memories of this game the circle is the basket rim which itself, because of its flawless symmetry, is an image of perfection. Describing his feelings about this game he says : "There was you and sometimes the ball and then the hole, the high perfect hole with its pretty skirt of net. It was you, just you and that fringed ring, and sometimes it stayed away, hard and remote and small."[48]

Once he felt he virtually captured the circle of perfection : "I get this funny feeling I can do anything, just drifting around, passing the ball, and all of a sudden I know, you see, I *know* I can do anything. The second half I take may be just ten shots, and everyone goes right in, not just bounces in, but doesn't touch the rim, like I'm dropping stones down a well."[49] Both Janice and Ruth are mystically and sexually associated with the circle. Before their marriage Harry made love to Janice in a room with the silver ovals.[50] When Harry looks out from Ruth's apartment, he sees the circular window of the church edifice which makes him think that the "circle of red and purple and gold seems in the city night a hole punched in reality to show the abstract brilliance burning underneath."[51] This circle, associated with Ruth, resembles the "silver medallions"[52] associated with Janice. This image of the circle of perfection is further extended in Rabbit's dream of an eclipse towards the end of the novel:

> He has a vivid dream: He is alone on a large sporting field, or vacant lot, littered with small pebbles. In the sky two perfect disks identical in size but the one a dense white and the other slightly transparent, move toward each other slowly; the pale one is directly above the dense one. At the moment they touch he feels frightened and the voice like over a loud speaker at a track meet announces, "the cowslip swallows up the elder." The downward gliding of the top one continues steadily until the other, though the stronger, is totally eclipsed, and just one circle is before his eyes, pale and pure. He understands "the cowslip" is the moon and the elder the sun, and that what he had witnessed is the explanation of death : lovely life eclipsed by lovely death.[53]

The most frequent image of *The Centaur* is that of an old motor-car. George Caldwell owns a "black Buick, a '36 fourdoor."[54] It is a long, heavy car, and its cylinders need to be rebored.[55] How it tortures George Caldwell is shown in the following passage:

> The car was slow to start in the cold. *Unh-uh, unh-uh,* the engine grunted, at first briskly and then more and more slowly, self-discouraged. 'Jesus, don't quit on me now,' my father breathed in a dancing stream of vapour. 'Start one more time and tomorrow I'll get your battery charged.'
>
> *Unnh-uh, unnnnh-ah.*
>
> My father switched off the ignition and we sat in the dark. He made a loose fist and blew into it. 'See', I said, 'if you'd worn your gloves you'd have 'em now.'[56]

This worn out motor-car is with George Caldwell only so long as he is making a spiritual quest. But when revelation comes to him he gets a chariot sent by Zimmerman[57] and gets relieved of this perpetual trouble.

In *Of the Farm* Updike uses the ghost imagery[58] as a motif to signify the intelligible influence of the past and the sense of death that pervades the whole novel. He plays with metaphors as a part of the visual art interest. The purpose that it fulfils is giving the imaginative view of infinity and death. Its best example is the bed-time story of the frog which went so far inside himself that it disappeared altogether.[59]

It is the building imagery that pervades *Couples*. Throughout the novel the action is correlated with buildings, whether the building is that of a house or that of a church. The houses of both Piet and Foxy have been described very minutely. Similar is the case with the church-building—the house of God. Piet, the protagonist, is a house-builder and Foxy, who later becomes his wife, gets her house constructed by him. Piet, with his builder's vision, studies a woman's body in terms of a house. It suggests that he associates a woman's body with a shelter. The opening chapter of the novel brings the description of Piet's house seen through Piet's eyes. It is "a graceful eighteenth-century farmhouse of eight rooms."[60] The congregational church

is "a Greek temple with a cupola and spire" and has alabaster effects "skilfully mimicked in wood.[61] When Piet thinks of his courtship with Angela he is reminded of the house with several clocks.[62] His conversation with Foxy brings to his mind the three ranch houses on the Indian Hill—the houses which have "reached a dismal state of incompletion."[63]

This image agrees with the content of the novel as it has been brought in to correlate the concept of salvation with getting a house—a shelter. The concept of salvation through sex is conveyed by making Piet both a builder of houses and a skilled sex-athlete. And the rejection of this concept is suggested by making Piet lose both his house and wife at the end of the novel.

In order to suggest that sexuality, instead of leading one to salvation, leads one to animality Updike employs animal imagery in this novel. For example, when Piet starts licking Foxy he is called "a kitten learning to drink milk from a saucer."[64] Piet himself feels "crabby"[65] in finding Foxy more attractive than he expected.

In *Rabbit Redux* Updike's images are an apt objective correlative of what Hamiltons call "the chaos of the present" and the novelist's "prescription for surviving it."[66] The most obvious image is that of space-travel. Each of the four sections of the novels has for its prefix the fragments of the conversation of the astronauts.[67] Various stages of the first Apollo-moon-flight are referred to in the novel, and the action of the novel also moves with them. The flight is in progress in the first scene. As the flight succeeds and the astronauts safely return to the earth, Harry and Janice dock in a motel bedroom at the end of the novel.

Updike expresses his disgust with the scientific advancement by depicting that the moonflight, though successful has brought man nothing but emptiness. The silver face of the moon is discovered to be nothing but gray dust. Updike suggests that the scientific world, when devoid of spiritualism, moves, like a spacecraft, towards nothingness.

As the astronauts discover the tow sides of the moon—silvery white and dark—Harry's house opens its gates to white Jill and black Skeeter. Jill, the silver-haired girl is a moonmaiden and Skeeter Farnsworth, the messiah of nihilism,[68] resembles

the cosmic darkness in colour. Jill violates all the accepted standards of the Christian morality[69] and Skeeter propagates the cause of confusion which he identifies with his God. Skeeter's fornicating with JIll, the burning of the house and Jill's death suggest the confusion that is rampant in the secular society which has attained remarkable scientific development.

Updike's image for Jill is her motor car—the white Porsche. She is ignorant of the fact that her car needs oil as well as gas until the engine is ruined. So is the case with her life. She leaves her home of Christianity and takes a sort of moonflight into sexuality—the land of sin—which is a sure road to an utter doom. Harry's return to Janice like the return of the astronauts to the earth represents a return to the traditional values of the revealed Christianity in place of Harry's or Jill's flight for natural theology.

Animal imagery is used in *Rabbit Redux* too. All the main characters are referred to as beats. For example, Skeeter is called "a goat"[70] and Harry Angstrom "a beast".[71] All this is done to establish that the revolutionary developments in the field of science such as those that enabled man to reach the moon have made man a beast, rather than a god.

The strong ghost imagery of the novel is employed in order to suggest the insubstantial quality of the scientifically advanced but secular life. The ghost-like figures of the astronauts on the moon, as transmitted by television are the natural models for ghost metaphors and sensations. Then Harry, Jill, Skeeter, Old Angstrom and Mim—all are described as ghosts[72] one time or another.

The underwater imagery is as pervasive in this novel as the space imagery. Harry's mother has the nightmares of drowning[73] and Skeeter and Nelson read an "underwater" passage from one of Skeeter's books.[74] It reminds the reader of the drowning of the baby Becky in *Rabbit, Run*,[75] and refers to the drowning that lies ahead for this secular society.

Death imagery is equally pervasive in the novel. The action of the novel begins in high summer and ends in October—the season when nature moves towards the sleep of winter.[76] Likewise, Harry's mother is rapidly moving towards death.[77] All these images are employed to convey the feeling that in Updike's eyes a secular society is sick and scientific developments only expedite its doom.

Allegory and symbolism are a suitable medium for the communication of the spiritual concepts. That is why Updike frequently uses these devices to convey his spiritual vision. In *The Poorhouse Fair* Updike uses symbols in order to convey how the secularism of the welfare state neglects man's spiritual needs and attempts to kill them. The cat which is hurt by an automobile and moves in the poorhouse with its crooked foreleg, infected face, and hanging teeth[78] symbolizes the condition of the inmates whose spirits are starving in Conner's paradise. Conner, the scientific minded altruist wishes to kill the religious feelings of the inmates. This is shown in his discussion with Hook and also symbolized by Conner's ordering the cat killed.[79] The rebellion of the inmates against their administrator symbolises the novelist's view that no amount of secularism can finally overthrow man's spiritual feelings.

In *Rabbit, Run* Tothero symbolizes immanence and Ruth stands for the sin of lechery.[80] Tothero's kinship with immanence is suggested by his profession of a basketball coach and his paying attention to the human body rather than to the spirit. Ruth's standing for sin is suggested by her profession which leads people to lechery.[81] Moreover, both Tothero and Ruth are atheists. Harry's going to Tothero for guidance and Tothero's leading him to Ruth embody Updike's view of natural theology. Since Harry goes to Tothero for guidance,[82] it suggests that natural theology is incapable of leading one to transcendence. Immanence, on the other hand, can lead one only to sin because Tothero leads Harry to Ruth, rather than to Kruppenbach, the champion of revealed theology and the symbol of transcendence.

The Centaur is an allegory of a Christian soul struggling for truth in a world where secularism is rampant. George Caldwell is a hybrid creature not only in the sense that he is both a man and a centaur but also because he is both a Christ and a Christian. As a Christian he is engaged in a quest for truth in a world dominated by indifference and hatred and tries to overcome death's horror and earth's evil. His sickness is the symbol of the agony he faces in the struggle against evil. But, as a Christ, he sacrifices himself for the redemption of the world. He approaches all the problems of life, like Christ, with humility and love. Though he tells his son that he is "one hundred percent selfish",[83] he is the most selfless person imaginable. For him

total freedom lies "in giving his life to others".[84] He suffers agony in his life and is, at last, crucified on a tree of pain the height of which towers heavenward.[85] He has accepted the sins of his pupils upon himself and offers himself as an atonement.

Peter Caldwell stands for the fallen human race for whose deliverance Christ gave himself in sacrifice. Here it is George Caldwell who sacrifices his life for Peter by going back to work. Peter cannot be regarded as a Satanic figure, though David Myers believes him to be so.[86] His sloth, lust, pride and envy merely signify his sharing man's fallibility which is accepted in the Christian concept of Fall.[87] If he is regarded as a satanic figure, there is no relevance of George Caldwell's sacrifice. George's sacrifice is meaningful and can be called Christ-like only if Peter is taken to be the symbol of mankind. Updike also displays Peter's kinship with the human race by making him long for redemption through contrition by making him pray repeatedly : "Forgive me, forgive me!"[88]

Robert Detweiler believes that Updike is not writing an allegory in this novel because "both dimensions of narrative in [this novel] are literally present."[89] No doubt, the stories of both Chiron and George, the Science teacher, are present in the novel, the Christian meaning that is interwoven in the novel is not literally present here. It is conveyed to the reader only through allegory.

In *Couples* sin is symbolized by Foxy. Piet's going to her suggests his falling into a sinful life. It is for this that he is punished and his church destroyed. Foxy's symbolizing sin is affirmed by her repeatedly tempting Piet to commit adultery. For some time Piet resists the temptation but since he is not armed with Christian revealed theology and possesses only an unbelieving conscience (symbolized by Angela, his wife)[90] he has to submit to it at last.

In order to show how sin leads a man into the clutches of Satan, Updike brings Jill and Skeeter in *Rabbit Redux*. Jill is the symbol of sin and Skeeter that of Satan. Harry's allowing Jill to live in his house and copulating with her signifies his living a sinful life. But Jill soon brings Skeeter to live with her here. Skeeter vomits hatred for Christ and Christianity.[91] He tries to persuade Harry to accept him as a Christ and Harry finds himself helpless. The burning of his house besides being a form of divine

chastisement, is a symbol of Christian sacrifice[92] which restores Harry to spiritual health.

Updike employs satire also to convey his vision and to indicate a disapproval of the non-Christian views. Some critics are of the opinion that Updike is not a satirist at all. For example, Alfred Chester points out : "... his view is not satiric and cannot be considered such because, first of all, the prevailing mood is nostalgia, and secondly, and more important, there is no outside point of reference, there is no proffered contrast or alternative to his world."[93] John Updike himself believes that satire is absent from his fiction. He, as Charles T. Samuels reports, said: "I'm not conscious of any piece of fiction of mine which has even the slightest taint of satirical attempt. You can't be satirical at the expense of fictional characters, because they're your creatures. You must love them...."[94]

However, Updike's novels are an evidence of his frequent use of satire in them. Conner, Tothero, Freddy Thorne, and Skeeter are all satirised portraits of anti-Christians. In all these cases Updike makes such a brilliant use of satire that he can be ranked high among the practitioners of this "ungentle art of ridicule."[95] *The Poorhouse Fair* satirises an atheistic champion of scientific progress. The narrator suggest his disapproval of Conner by exposing him and showing that a wide gulf that exists between what he professes and what he does. Though Conner professes to be a rationalist he is entirely irrational in his ways and views. In spite of loudly declaring his altruism he is jealous of Hook's popularity.[96]

Rabbit, Run satirizes Marty Tothero, the basketball coach in whose world God has never entered. Marty Tothero fails to go beyond the body and has no knowledge of the human spirit. Updike satirizes him by giving him a disgusting appearance and by making him fall a victim of bodily paralysis in spite of focussing his attention on his body throughout his life. When his lips are wet with whisky "saliva keeps trying to sneak out of the corner of his mouth."[97] He is likened to a crab which moves sideways and his mouth is shown to be "a sickly mixture of bravado and shame, and worse, pride, or, less than pride, conceit."[98]

Reverend Horace Pedrick, in *Couples*, has his delusions centred about money. Christianity which totally closes the gates

of heaven for the rich man[99] fails to prevent this priest from becoming a worshipper of Mammon. The narrator mocks him: "In the pulpit, his white hair standing erect as the water on it dried, he held himself braced against imagined mockery, and his sermons, with contortions that now and then bent his body double, sought to transpose the desiccated forms of Christianity into financial terms."[100]

Freddy Thorne, the preacher of the sexuality sect, who is largely responsible for the all-consuming adultery in Tarbox[101] is satirized in the scene in which he beds down with Piet's wife. In spite of being the high priest of adultery and getting an opportunity to do it after seeking it for such a long time he displays his incapability at the crucial moment. This failure is a satire on his sect and suggests the novelist's disapproval of the view.

Skeeter, the champion of the cause of the Negroes in America, is satirized quite bitterly. He expresses hatred against the whites who have been brutal to his race. But the feelings of revenge make him equally brutal. He becomes almost a champion of the cause of fornication and allows a white girl to be grabbed by flames in Harry's house. Though he declares himself to be a black Christ,[102] his behaviour is not at all Christ-like. He is not only an adulterer but also a bundle of vices like revengefulness, wrath, ingratitude and deceit.[103] Updike's satire goes to the extent of making him a pigmy Satan.[104]

The prose style Updike employs in his novels again suits the needs of his fiction. The constant shifts between the narrative and the stream-of-consciousness techniques are made with a purpose. In the ordinary situations the novelist uses the narrative form of writing while the temper of the crucial times and places is conveyed through the stream-of-consciousness passages. For example, *Rabbit, Run* opens with the following passage : "Boys are playing basketball around a telephone pole with a blackboard bolted to it. Legs, shouts. The scrape and snap of Keds on loose alley pebbles seems to catapult their voices high into the moist March air blue above the wires."[105] But when Harry leaves Ruth's apartment for the last time in a state of despair, a stream-of-consciousness passage is brought to describe his nervousness : "He decides to walk around the block, to clear his head and pick his path. Funny, how what makes you move is so simple

and the field you must move in is so crowded.... It's like when they heard you were great and put two men on you and no matter which way you bumped into one of them and the only thing to do was pass. So you passed and the ball belonged to the others and your hands were empty and the men on you looked foolish because in effect there was nobody there."[106] In this passage the novelist fuses the past and the present by bringing in the memory of Harry's innocent days. It is done in order to make Harry conscious of the trap into which he has fallen.

The accuracy and finish of Updike's lyrical prose have been widely talked of and admired. For example, according to Granville Hicks, "Updike has a mastery of language to be matched in our time by the finest poets."[107] David D. Galloway calls Updike "one of the most skilful stylists of our age."[108] Of course, Updike possesses the gift of language. He handles it very brilliantly. He has a genius for words and feel for language that reminds one of the greatest stylists. He seems to have taken to his heart the sermon preached by the young minister in *Of the Farm*: "... language aerates the barren density of brute matter with the penetrations of the mind, of the spirit"[109] and to have acted in perfect accordance with the theory that only the most appropriate words should be used by a writer and that no word can be replaced by any of its so-called, synonyms. He displays in his works, what is known as, the power of exact language.[110]

But it is believed that suitable correlation between his thought and form does not exist. His prose is believed to be overly lyrical and it is repeatedly remarked that he wastes wealth of words on the commonplaces themes. For example Norman Podhoretz remarks in his essay "A Dissent on Updike" that Updike's prose is overly lyrical, bloated like a child who had eaten too much of candy.[111] He finds it abounding in "verbal pyrotechnics" and "display of rhetorical virtuousity"[112] William O'Conner finds Updike's prose to be an exhibition of his "genius for words" serving "only trivialities".[113] Joseph Epstein, in the same vein, finds Updike to be so much fascinated by the gift of language that he is "prone to fall captive to it- and often at the expense of his narrative."[114] David D. Galloway also remarks that "... Updike has... been challenged by numerous critics for

becoming so involved with the stylistic technique that he fails to create either intensity or scope."[115]

However, Updike's use of figurative prose is quite appropriate and in absolute agreement with the needs of his fiction. He, as has already been discussed, makes use of the devices of mythical parallelism and allegory in his novels and they demand the use of figurative language. This requirement of an allegory is acknowledged by Edwin Honig who states: "We find the allegorical quality in a twice-told tale written in rhetorical or figurative language and expressing a vital belief."[116] The need of figurative language in a myth-based novel is stressed by Granville Hicks too.[117] Thus, Updike uses metaphorical prose in his fiction, not to exhibit his capacity to write such a prose but to meet the requirement of his themes. And the adverse critical judgments on his use of prose are a consequence of the critics' failure to define his vision before evaluating his technique. The technique a writer employs always relates back to his metaphysics and a critic's task is to define the latter before evaluating the former. Updike's brilliant language does not function in a void. It is properly related to the subject matter. For example, in *Rabbit, Run* where Updike makes use of a whole palimpsest of literary associations for the delineation of an instinct-based life, the brilliance of his prose matches with the thought.[118] It shows that the novelist possesses not only a formidable gift of language but also an alertness to his problem. He could never achieve his desired effect without his use of figurative language. Likewise, in *Of the Farm* Updike employs words which catch, what Detweiler calls, "the flavor of authentic Pennsylvania German speech."[119] In *The Centaur* the richness of prose matches with the use of allegory and the depiction of the theme of salvation.[120]

Granville Hicks considers Updike's descriptions handsome but irrelevant.[121] But the descriptions in the novels of Updike are not only not irrelevant but also an apt vehicle of the novelist's thought. He describes his landscapes, situations, and consciousness and behaviour of his characters in such a manner that they also convey what the story is intended to do. For example, in *Rabbit, Run* Updike depicts Harry's ensnarement not only through Harry's inability to take decisions but also by

giving map-like geographical details in which his mind is entrapped:

> He crossed the Running Horse Bridge and is among the streets he knows. He takes Warren Avenue through the south side of town and comes out on 422 near City Park. He drives around the mountain in company with a few hissing trailer trucks. As he turns left from Central into Jackson he nearly sideswipes a milk truck idling yards out from the curb. He continues up Jackson, past his parents' house, and turns into Kegerise Alley, and in the clear dawn light he glides past the old chicken house, past the silent body shop, and parks the car in front of the Sunshine Athletic Association a few steps from the boxed-in entrance, where anyone coming out would have to notice.[122]

Harry's observing what is immediately before him indicates his lack of far-sightedness and his preoccupation with the immediate. He is lost in the trap of this route and the objects around him against which he measures himself stand for the trap into which his impulsive behaviour has thrown him. According to Gerry Brenner, these map-like details imply a sense of directed identity and exhibit that Rabbit is able to place himself geographically by accounting for the objects and places along a given route and thus gains a false sense of identity.[123] However, what is shown in the passage is not Harry's gaining a sense of identity but his losing himself in a trap where he can see nothing else but the strings tightening around his neck.

Likewise, Harry's being a natural man is suggested not only by showing what he does but also by minutely describing what he observes and imagines. For example, when Harry is on his way to his parents' and reaches near the small-box factory, the thought of summer brings to his imagination "wealth of weeds, waxy green wands and milky pods of silk seeds and airy yellow heads almost liquid with pollen."[124] The alliterative luxuriant of the words used here indicates Harry's intense impulse for the natural.

The descriptions of the landscapes suit the characters to whom they are attributed. For example, in *The Centaur* it is Peter Caldwell who narrates the incidents which his father encounters during the course of three days. Since Peter is a painter, all the descriptions given in this novel indicate that it is a painter who is observing each landscape. Even the prose of the novel has an artist's sensibility. Here is an example of the precise picturing of minor details : "The narrow pavement was lined with small bars and shut barber parlours. The sky was an unsteady yellow above the tenements and even at the zenith paleness drained stars from the night."[125] It shows Peter's characteristic fondness for precise evocative description. Many of the descriptions given by Peter are gemed with similes and metaphors. For example, Peter describes the old motor car of his father : "The shape of our car sat on its shadow like a frog looking into a mirror."[126] Only a painter-poet could describe a car in these terms.

Since woman and land—human world and impersonal world of nature—have been merged together in *Of the Farm* [see *supra*], most of the descriptions are given in such a manner that they embrace both the human world and nature. For example, in the following passage both nature and man are made to act simultaneously :"To close the window I left the bed. The small thump of the sash seemed to trigger the night; lightning flashed behind Schoelkopf's hill and thunder, like a violent guest grown so much at home, clapped."[127] The thump of the window is accompanied by the flash of lightning. The word "clapped" brings the reconciliation of the two worlds since, though associated with the human world, it is applied here to the world of nature. The long paragraph devoted to describe Peggy adds to the same effect:

> My wife is wide, wide-hipped and long waisted, and, surveyed from above gives an impression of terrain, of a wealth whose ownership imposes upon my own body a sweet strain of extension; entered, she yields a variety of landscapes, seeming now a snowy rolling perspective of bursting cotton balls seen through the Negro arabesques of a fancy work wrought-iron balcony; now a taut vista of mesas dreaming in the midst of sere and

> painterly ochre; now a gray French castle complexly fitted to a steep green hill whose terraces imitate turrets; now something like Antarctica; and then a receding valley land of blacks and purples where an unrippled river flows unseen between shadowy banks of grapes that are never eaten. Over all, like a sky, withdrawn and cool, hangs—hovers, stands, *is*—is the sense of her consciousness, of her composure, of a non-committal witnessing that preserves me from claustrophobia through any descent however deep.[128]

Joey discovers similarities between his wife and his farm in order to identify woman with the earth.

The designs of Updike's novels are again in agreement with their content. The structure of *The Poorhouse Fair* is that of a solid globe suspended in space. The world of the poorhouse, a self-contained little world, resembles a solid globe because the Christian religiousness is left only in this small poorhouse and the world outside is a home of irreligious thinking. It agrees with the content of the novel which indicates that religion is the only solid thing in life. *Rabbit, Run,* which records Harry's flights, is shaped like a longitudinal line that appears to be moving straight but comes round to meet itself because Harry, in spite of running throughout the novel, remains where he was. Similar is the case with Harry's natural theology. It leaves him where he was and takes him not even an inch towards spiritual enlightenment. *The Centaur* is designed in the form of two overlapping vertical lines. The first line is the visual form of the story of George and the second that of Chiron. The movements of George change according to what he achieves in the spiritual field. At the beginning, when he is found limping, he is terribly confused. Then he is found riding in his old car which fails him in the snow storm. This is the stage when the revelation is slowly moving towards him. And God's grace comes to him when he gets a 'chariot' at the end of the novel. The two lines make the road to salvation, which is the content of the novel, visible.

The structure of *Of the Farm* is in the figure of a cross because the stories of Joan and Peggy cut each other at the central point of Joey. This figure of cross suits the conflict that marks Joey's

life. But the resolution of the conflict comes to Joey when he goes to church which is again symbolized by the figure of the cross. This figure is mainly significant because it refers to the basic metaphor of the novel — woman is the mystery of the being to be plumbed. Since woman's place in the universe is that of security, she is an axle of man's life. And the figure of the cross again possesses an axle on which the two lines of the figure touch each other.

The structure of *Couples* resembles that of a ball which bursts when too much of air is pushed in it. The circle formed by the tarbox couples also resembles the shape of the ball. The fire which burns the church causes the burst and disbands the circle. This structure agrees with the rejection of the sex-doctrine which its votaries consider to be a doctrine giving spiritual security. *Rabbit Redux* is designed in the form of two unsuccessful space flights. The flights of both Jill and Janice—movements away from Christianity[129]—fail. The flight of Jill ends in death and that of Janice in a return. This structure again agrees with the content of the novel that stands for a return to Christianity and its pristine religiousness.[130]

Thus Updike has a philosopher's mind but artist's eye. He has attained success as a writer because he has significant things to say about the eternal problems of life and says them well. The view of Rachael C. Bruchard that "much of what he says is still in the form of questions...."[131] fails to state the whole truth. Updike not only raises questions but also answers them. His work has a depth and integrity. It reveals a mind of meditative nature and its capacity for growth. His work has already earned him a place in American literature and, it is hoped, his subsequent work will add to what he has achieved so far.

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2. This fact is embodied in Acharya Mammat's view that literature teaches like a wife:
Kāvyam yashase arthakrite vyavhār vide shivetrakshtaye, Sadyah parnivirttaye kāntā sammitayopadeshyuje
(emphasis added).

(English translation—The blessings which accompany the study of literature are fame, money, commonsense, general welfare, immediate relief and the *sermons that one gets from one's wife*) [*Kāvya Prakāsh*, Chapter I, Kārikā 2].

3. "Technique as Discovery", *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951*, ed. J. W. Aldridge (New York : The Ronald Press Company, 1952), p. 67.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
5. These concepts were long ago declared out of date by virginia Woolf who wrote : "Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. It is not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity, it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?" ["Modern Fiction", *Modern British Fiction : Essays in Criticism*, ed. Mark Schorer (New York : Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 6].
6. Jack Richard, "Keeping up with Updike", *The New York Review of Books*, 22 October 1970, p. 46.
7. John Thomson, "Mattheissen and Updike", *The New York Review of Books*, 23 December 1965, p. 23.
8. "Twitches and Embarrassments", *Commentary*, XXXIV (July 1962), p. 77.
9. Charles T. Samuels, "The Art of Fiction XLIII : John Updike", *Paris Review*, XII (Winter 1968), p. 104.
10. T.S. Eliot points out in his essay 'Religion in Literature': "What I want is a literature which should be unconsciously, rather than deliberately and defiantly, Christian...." [*New Orpheus : Essays Toward a Christian Poetics*, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (New York : Sheed and Ward, 1964), p. 226].

11. Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Truth in Myths", *Faith and Politics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York : George Braziller, 1968), p. 15.
12. Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London : Oxford University Press, 1963), p: 1.
13. See Chapter III.
14. The Acts, 6 : 5.
15. The Acts, 7 : 60.
16. See Chapter III.
17. "*Rabbit, Run* : John Updike's Criticism of the 'Return to Nature'," *Twentieth Century Literature*, XII (April 1966), p. 3.
18. See Chapter VI.
19. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), p. 152.
20. Genesis, 18 : 20 : 19 : 24-25.
21. *Ibid.*, 19 : 26.
22. See Chapter II.
23. *Doings and Undoings* (New York : Noonday, 1964), p. 256.
24. *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel* (Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 264.
25. Nikos Kazantsakis, in his novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*, brings Jesus Christ himself as its hero. He portrays Jesus as a preacher of love and brotherhood and shows how he met all the temptations with heroic firmness.
26. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 39.
27. A.F. Scott, *Current Literary Terms* (London : Macmillan; New York : St. Martin's Press, 1965), p. 190.
28. It can be seen in the following passage:
"Why is it, love, that faces we love look upon each remeeting so fresh, as if our hearts have in this instant again minted them? How can I describe her to you justly? She was small and not unusual. Her lips were too plumb and irksomely self-satisfied; her nose rather cursory and nervous. Her eyelids were vaguely Negroid, heavy puffy, bluish, and incongruously worldly-wise when taken with the startled grassy innocence of her eyes" [*The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 108.]
29. T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses; Order, and Myth", *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951*, ed. John W. Aldridge (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), p. 426.
30. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics* (New York and London : Harper and Brothers, 1935), p. 26.
31. "The Truth in Myths", *Faith and Politics*, ed. Ronald H. Stone (New York : George Braziller, 1968), p. 31.
32. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), pp. 20-21.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 70.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
37. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 67.
38. See Chapter VI.
39. See Chapter IV.
40. For example once he tells Ruth : "I was great. It's the fact. I mean I'm not much good for any thing now, but I really was good at that." [*Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 64].
41. See Chapter VI.
42. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1970), p. 5.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
44. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 135.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
48. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 35.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
52. *Rabbit, Run* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1970), p. 15.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 234-35.
54. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 67.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
57. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), pp. 268-69.
58. *Of the Farm* (New York : Knopf, 1965), p. 168.
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 150 ff.
60. *Couples* (Greenwich : Fawcett, 1968), p. 9.
61. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 22.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 234.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
66. Alice Hamilton and Kenneth Hamilton, "John Updike's Prescription for Survival", *The Christian Century*, LXXXIX (5-12 July 1972), p. 740.
67. The opening section of the novel is prefixed by:

    Lieut. Col. Vladimir A. Shatalov : *I am heading straight for the socket.*

    Lieut. Col. Boris V.Volynov, Soyuz 5 Commander : *Essay, Not So rough.*

    Colonel Shatalov : *It took me quite a while to find you, but now I've got you* (*Rabbit Redux*, p. 2).

While the last section by:

> Col. Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr. : *Now you're clear. Over toward me. Straight down, to your left a little bit. Plenty of room. You're lined of nicely. Toward me a little bit. Down. O.K. Now you're clear. You're catching the first hinge. The what hinge? All right, move. Roll to the left. O.K., now you're clear. You're lined up on the platform. Put your left foot to the right a little bit. O.K., that's good. More left. Good.*
>
> Neil Armstrong : *O.K., Houston, I'm on the Porch* (*Ibid.*, p. 338).

68. See Chapter III.
69. See Chapter IV.
70. *Rabbit, Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), p. 205.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 347.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 52, 157, 250, 261, 381.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-74.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 244-45.
75. See Chapter IV.
76. *Rabbit, Redux* (London : Andre Deutsch, 1972), pp. 3, 404.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 364-65.
78. *The Poorhouse Fair* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1968), p. 45.
79. See Chapter III.
80. See Chapter III.
81. See Chapter III and IV.
82. See Chapter VI.
83. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), p. 264.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-97.
86. "The Questing Fear : Christian Allegory in John Updike's The Centaur", *Twentieth Century Literature*, XVII (April 1971), p. 75.
87. See Chapter VI.
88. *The Centaur* (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1970), pp. 151, 166, 195.
89. *John Updike* (New York : Twayne, 1972), p. 82.
90. See Chapter VI.
91. See Chapter III.
92. See Chapters VI and VII.
93. "Twitches and Embarrassments", *Commentary*, XXXIV (July 1962), p. 77.
94. "The Art of Fiction XLIII : John Updike", *Paris Review*, XII (Winter 1968), p. 108.
95. Henry C. Carlisle, Jr., *American Satire in Prose and Verse* (New York : Random House, 1962), p. 107.

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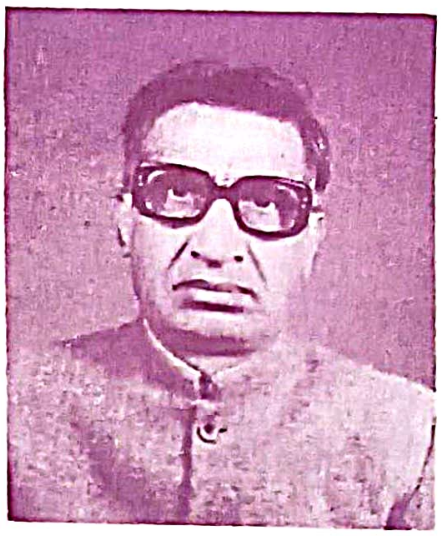

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